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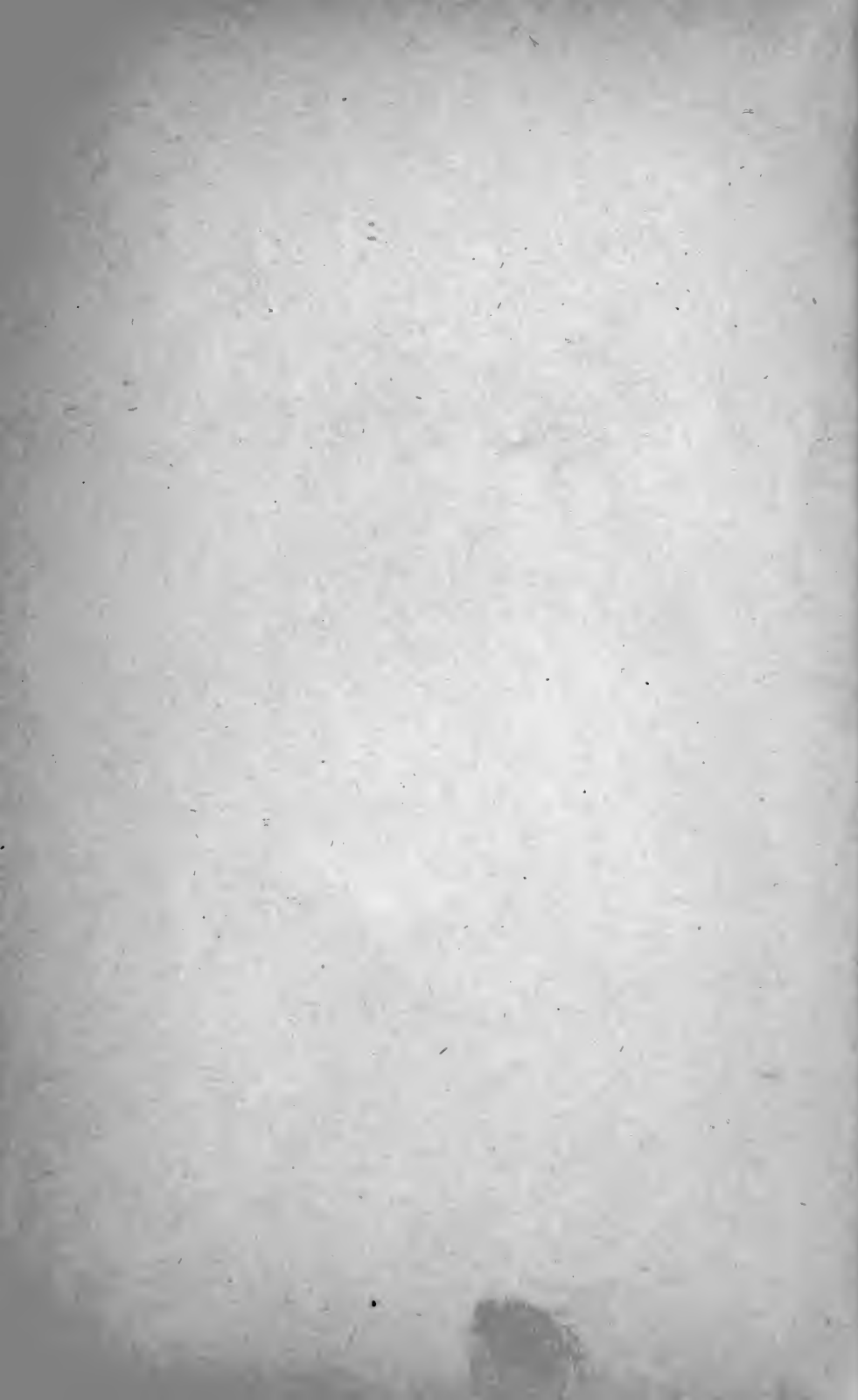
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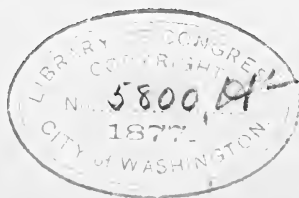




HALF-HOUR STUDIES OF LIFE.

BY

✓
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PREFACE.

IF the brief chapters of this little volume may be called "Studies of Life," it is in the sense, not of abstruse speculations, but of simple surveys of real facts, proceeding in the natural order from the less to the greater, and intent only on a better understanding of the true art of living. If they seem, here and there, to be without close or formal connection, let it be remembered that, with most people, the great study of life is necessarily resolved into many separate parts, as one question after another comes up for consideration in occasional half-hours of leisure.

Selecting a few of these questions, which are of special personal and practical interest, the author endeavors to *open the way* for clear and

comprehensive views of the truth, and hopes thus to help his readers to the best ordering and happiest issue of earthly life and labor.

E. A. J.

ALLEGHENY CITY, PA., *January*, 1877.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I. THE GREAT SCHOOL,	9
II. FIRST QUESTIONS,	16
III. OUT OF ORDER,	23
IV. AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY,	29
V. THE INDISPENSABLE REQUISITE,	36
VI. SAFETY IN TEMPTATION,	42
VII. THE MASTER PASSION,	49
VIII. UNDER DIFFICULTIES,	56
IX. THE ONE GREAT WORK,	62
X. OVER AND OVER AGAIN,	69
XI. IN REAL LIFE,	77
XII. THE CHRIST LIFE,	83
XIII. TESTS OF THE LIFE,	90
XIV. ARRESTED GROWTH,	96
XV. FOOD AND GROWTH,	102
XVI. WORK AND GROWTH,	109
XVII. WARMTH AND GROWTH,	116
XVIII. CULTURE AND GROWTH	123
XIX. GROWTH AND FRUIT,	130
XX. SUNDRY FACTS OF GROWTH,	136

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
XXI. THE QUESTION OF GREATNESS, . . .	142
XXII. "ONE IS YOUR MASTER," . . . , .	148
XXIII. A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE, . . .	153
XXIV. LEGITIMATE STRIFE,	160
XXV. THE BEST PLACE,	167
XXVI. "PRAY FOR US."	173
XXVII. WHO CARES FOR ME?	179
XXVIII. "THE YOUNG CHILD,"	185
XXIX. HOME POWER,	192
XXX. HOME WORK,	199
XXXI. HINTS FOR HOME WORK,	204
XXXII. TRUE VALUE OF AMUSEMENTS, . . .	210
XXXIII. THE BEST INVESTMENT,	216
XXXIV. ACTION AND COUNTERACTION, . . .	223
XXXV. BRIDGE THE CHASMS!	228
XXXVI. PERFECT COMMUNITY,	233
XXXVII. "MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR," . . .	239
XXXVIII. VARIETY IN UNITY OF WORK, . . .	245
XXXIX. CO-OPERATION FOR CHRIST, . . .	251
XL. DISAPPEARANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL, . .	258
XLI. THE QUESTION OF POWER,	265
XLII. THE POINT TO BE GAINED.	272
XLIII. CARRYING THE POINT	279
XLIV. THE QUESTION OF METHOD, , . .	285
XLV. DEFECTIVE METHODS,	291
XLVI. NECESSITY OF SPECIAL TRAINING, . .	297
XLVII. OUR SECULAR RELATIONS,	304

CONTENTS.

7

CHAPTER.	PAGE
XLVIII. THE EVIL IN BUSINESS,	310
XLIX. CONVERSION OF MONEY,	316
L. "FOR VALUE RECEIVED,"	322
LI. UNDER THE SAME LAW,	328
LII. THE TEST OF THE TILT,	333
LIII. FUTURE RETROSPECTION,	339



HALF-HOUR STUDIES OF LIFE.

I.

THE GREAT SCHOOL.

IT is not the public or common school, which offers its advantages alike to all the children of the land, and is justly regarded as indispensable to our national prosperity and the safety of our free institutions. It is not the Sunday-school, where, from early childhood, all the people may study and know the Holy Scriptures which are able to make them wise unto salvation. Nor is it any other school, so called, such as the seminary, academy, college, or university. And yet it is really a school, more so than any other can be—a school in the highest, broadest, truest sense.

In this institution of learning “school-days” are not passed when the rudimentary training of childhood and youth gives place to the duties

and work of advancing maturity. Indeed, these days are as uncertain and variable as life itself, sometimes closed at an early period, and in other cases continued to extreme old age.

The tuition is not conducted on any narrow and cramping system of human devising, nor marked by the ignorance, infirmities, and unskillfulness of fallible teachers. It is specifically adapted to individual peculiarities, embraces every real interest of human beings, and employs methods hitherto scarcely approached by the best educators among men.

The place is no "pent-up Utica," limited in capacity, apparatus, and endowment, and attended only by a select number, or from personal choice. It is as wide as the world, and equal in all respects to the wants of the entire race. In short, it is the world itself, with its abundant furniture, diversified labors, and ever-changing scenes. Every responsible human being is a pupil by necessity through the whole period of probation, and the Father of the spirits of all flesh is every-where present as the Great Teacher.

This view of the present state of being is not a mere conceit designed to illustrate a few prominent phases; it fully accords with the facts of the case, and affords the only complete interpre-

tation of human life, with its otherwise impenetrable mysteries.

If this life were nothing more than a probation under the administration of government, then its only purpose would be to ascertain what each one would do, and therefore what should be done with him at the end. It would be simply a trial of character, to be followed by reward or punishment when the testing process is finished. But, in addition to this, it is a period of pupilage—of preparation, as well as of probation—where ample facilities are furnished for personal improvement, and where trial is wholly subordinate to training, and a necessary part of the great system of human education.

This is only the first stage of our existence, the real childhood of our immortality, and is therefore chiefly prospective in its ultimate designs and results. Here is the beginning; hereafter is the consummation. As "the boy is father of the man," so this life contains and determines the next. The right or wrong education of boyhood produces fruit after its own kind through all the years of manhood, subject in some degree to modifying influences; but even more certainly the character of the man, now formed and fixed, is carried forward into the great future, retaining its essential qualities,

and accompanied by corresponding happiness or misery.

Is the training of mind and body in childhood of any subsequent value? Is it a wise and beneficent provision that fifteen or twenty years are assigned as the natural period of growth, culture, and special training for the labors and responsibilities of our earthly life? Surely it is well that we are not thrown out upon the world, to bear its burdens and fight its battles, while yet in the ignorance and weakness of infancy; and it has been found that the allotted time of preparation is no more than enough when most faithfully improved. Even so the whole of life, as God gives it, waits upon the interests of a future state, and requires suitable instruction, discipline, and development.

So we are all and always at school, until we are dismissed at death, and sent out upon the untried—and, alas! the often unanticipated—realities of another mode of being. Then the results of present faithfulness or neglect will fully appear, and the actual value of life will be estimated by its success or failure as a school of character.

As the schooling is fraught with eternal and unchangeable consequences, it certainly should be under the most competent management.

Is the greatest wisdom of men sufficient? In such matters it is only foolishness, and itself needs instruction. But with all the knowledge now possessed, and derived from a higher source, it is still unequal to the task. Any man may hold and communicate correct general principles bearing upon the relations of the life that now is to that which is to come; but how can he prescribe the various details of discipline best suited to individual cases? Even for himself he is likely to misjudge under the bias of his inclinations, and so choose the present gratification rather than the future good; and in deciding for others he is just as liable to error from unavoidable ignorance of the secrets of the heart.

It is obvious, then, that none but God can meet the demands of the situation; and this he condescends to do. This he does in very fact, not only with commensurate wisdom and command of resources, but with a loving care that omits nothing needful, orders nothing but the best, and never overlooks the least among his pupils. His ways may be, and often are, unsearchable; but they challenge our faith as the ways of our only competent educator, and their purpose of highest wisdom and beneficence can never be called in question.

Now, let this grand scheme of education

under divine superintendence be heartily accepted according to the facts of the case, and it throws a new and wonderful light upon every scene of life.

Are we only children away from home at school? Then we have yet to attain our majority and enter upon our inheritance. Beyond the transition from earth an eventful future lies before us, all the interests of which depend of necessity upon our thorough personal qualification. To secure such qualification is, therefore, the one great purpose of present work.

But what shall we do? The matter is not left in doubt, nor subject to chance and human caprice. God himself answers clearly and definitely in the person of his Son, by the agency of his Spirit, through the directions of his Word and the orderings of his Providence.

To the earnest disciple, alert to catch the lesson of the hour, nothing is insignificant, or without some practical bearing upon the momentous issue. All circumstances, events, influences, experiences, are educational in their tendencies and effects as adapted parts of the complicated scheme. Are there differences of treatment and mysteries of design? The pupils are not all alike, some being quite intractable, and others ready to learn. Nor are

they, as pupils, supposed to understand the necessity of every means of discipline; the Infallible Teacher knows, and that is enough for the heartiest acquiescence and the largest confidence of ultimate benefit.

With such provisions, both general and special, not one of all the children of men need live in vain; and even the lowliest life of submission to God may have the inspiration and joy of success assured, complete, and eternal. The whole question turns upon the one point of individual faithfulness in the great school.

II.

FIRST QUESTIONS.

IN the industries of the world, machinery plays an unquestionably important part. Judiciously employed, it economizes resources, diminishes toil, increases production, and secures many valuable results otherwise quite impossible. Thus it comes to the front rank among the practical questions of the age, and engages a large share of attention. In what respects is it susceptible of improvement? To what new purposes can it be applied? How shall its benefits be made yet more widely available? By all means, let its range of usefulness be enlarged to the utmost possible extent. In the world's great work we can not afford to lose the services of such an auxiliary.

But, after all, it is nothing more than an auxiliary, and holds a place of only secondary importance. Of what advantage is the very best machinery in the hands of fools, drunkards, scoundrels, or savages? Manifestly, the first and great question to be considered in seeking to

promote industrial prosperity relates not to machinery, but to the men by whom it may be used, to their principles and abilities and real character. Invention follows education, business enterprise keeps pace with human development, and the decline of industry attends inevitably upon the decay of manhood. "The lost arts," of which only the slightest traces are now found by antiquarians, were lost with the civilization of which they were the product. It is therefore ruinously preposterous to neglect the man while seeking to perfect his implements, or to overlook the cultivation of character in absorbing devotion to the details of economy. Even material interests require that first questions shall be first.

The form of civil government is generally regarded as a matter of chief concern in the welfare of nations. It certainly has much to do with the development of the resources of a country, and with the progress and happiness of its people. One form rests upon the hereditary claims of a dynasty and is either an absolute or a limited monarchy. In the one case it is administered by a single will, with no other than self-imposed restraints; in the other, power is divided between the sovereign and certain bodies more or less representative, the measure of popular

liberty being determined by the provisions of a constitution. Quite another form is founded upon the inherent rights of the people, and is administered in all its branches by their chosen representatives. This lodges the power of governing in the hands of the governed, and is supposed to be in the highest degree favorable to their interests.

But what is the actual value of the most perfect form of government the world has ever seen, when it has been committed to a majority of atheists and madmen? History and philosophy both furnish a most decisive answer. Free institutions are soon perverted, and become utterly impracticable, except when established upon the broad basis of popular intelligence and virtue. The art of individual self-government must first be acquired under the teachings and discipline of Christianity; and, until this is accomplished in some good degree by a majority of the people, they can not safely be trusted with the administration of civil affairs. It is therefore altogether idle to attempt the universal enfranchisement of a nation by giving attention to matters of mere organization, to the neglect of the first and fundamental questions of intellectual and moral culture. For the greatest benefits of civil government, as well as of indus-

trial pursuits, the natural order of precedence must be strictly observed, and first questions must ever remain first in popular regard and practical consideration.

In purely personal affairs, the body seems to have the first claim to attention. At any rate, it presents and urges its claim first, and most clamorously. "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" is a question representing primary physical necessities. Little can be done by or for the higher nature until these imperative wants of the body are duly supplied. But this apparent precedence of the physical and material in human nature is confined entirely to the order of development and the relations of dependence upon external conditions. The body is first to declare itself, because, unlike the soul, it requires immediate and continual supplies for its very existence, as well as for the growth and vigor by which it becomes able to fulfill its purpose. But, after all, it is only the instrument or servant of the soul, and derives all its value from this relation. That is to say, while the body is first in dependence, and therefore in its asserted demands, it is really secondary in its legitimate rank, functions, and claims. Indeed, the very fact of its ceaseless dependence upon

the bread that perishes is proof of its inferiority; and its claims occupy the same level with its necessities.

If, then, the servant is not greater than his master, nor the house superior to its occupant, the soul is first in the order of importance, and may insist upon its right to chief attention. This right it vindicates as the active agent in human affairs, by carrying the blessing of culture, or the curse of neglect, through the whole course of its influence. The welfare of the body and all other temporal interests—to say nothing of a future state—are involved in those of the soul by the operation of natural law, and according to the proclamation of Him who said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” This is the divinely constituted order of human life; and its first questions are first by irreversible decree.

With the righteous man it may be supposed that this order has been duly observed, and is never forgotten. As the Church is composed of such men, and avowedly conducts its operations under the same law, we may expect to find here the persistent concentration of interest and effort upon first questions. Here, at last, is a grand illustration and commanding example of

the proper methods of dealing with all human interests. Surely, the Church of Christ will not forget the spiritual in the material; nor prefer the "anise and cummin" to the weightier matters of the law; nor neglect the cultivation of its own piety, and the work of winning souls, by giving chief attention to questions of ecclesiastical polity and temporal economy. Not that such questions are unimportant; for, like mechanical contrivances in the useful arts, or the political institutions of a State, or the physical implements of the soul, the constitutional forms and prudential regulations of a Church have no small influence upon its efficiency and success; but they also have only a secondary place and claim.

What is the machinery without the man, or the State without principle, or the body without the soul, or the Church without life? In the last, even more than in any of the others, effective power comes from spiritual life. With such life, the most defective forms spring into vast achievements; without it, the most perfect become wholly impracticable, or fail of any substantial results. The most glorious triumphs of the infant Church were won at Jerusalem before it had taken scarcely the semblance of an outward organization. The first in order then was

the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in answer to fervent prayer and as the power of effective work; and the precedent was established for all the ages.

Thus it appears that, every-where, ways and means and forms are at the most of only secondary importance. By the natural order of things, and the express appointment of God, questions relating to the spirit and character of the man have a rightful priority of interest and claim. In the established curriculum of life's great school, these are always first questions.

III.

OUT OF ORDER.

IF the clock strikes six when it should strike two, or becomes irregular in movement, and now and then stops altogether, it is said to be "out of order;" an explanation not very specific, but sufficiently significant. Such a clock evidently needs repairing; it has suffered some injury or disarrangement of its parts, which may perhaps be corrected, but in consequence of which it now fails to serve the purpose for which it was made. "Out of order" indicates the general nature of the difficulty, and the action necessary to be taken.

This being out of order may seem the merest trifle in itself, but it has a way of growing into troublesome consequence. For instance, the owner of the disordered clock starts from his slumbers at the stroke of six, and becomes fully aroused and ready for the day a little after midnight—a striking mistake. Or, he has an important engagement to meet at a place miles away on the railroad, and hurries early to the

depot, only to find the train going and gone—that clock again. But the liabilities may be far more serious. By a slight irregularity of the conductor's watch a crowded railway train barely escapes a fearful collision—only the space of a minute between actual safety and averted destruction. The ship's chronometer has varied only a few seconds since leaving port; but in consequence the reckoning is at fault, and the ship is lost among the breakers, with all on board.

If a trifle of disorder breeds such trouble by a time-piece, what may be expected when greater things are out of order? Is it any wonder that the world is so full of trouble, when something is wrong, not merely with its instruments, but with a great number of its principal actors?

In comparison with human beings, the time-piece is indeed a trifle. The clock or watch which fails of its purpose may be cast aside at the beginning, with only the loss of itself; but not so the self-acting man, who goes forth in the midst of his fellows with the human power to mislead and destroy. Out of order in himself, he becomes the very fountain of disorder and consequent disaster in the world. But even if he were to inflict no injury upon others, to be cast away himself, as a hopeless wreck in body

and soul, is a calamity sufficiently appalling. Only "out of order," it is true; but that, in human nature, may have an extent of meaning no words can reach.

What, then, shall be done? For the time-piece, or any mere machine—let it be repaired. By whom? By its maker, if possible—at least by some one competent to the task. Such course of action seems only the dictate of common prudence, and would probably be adopted at once by any person interested. But how much more is it required for disordered human nature, with an organism infinitely more delicate and complex! Can any man safely presume upon his ability, without aid, to set every thing right in his own mysterious being? Having the good sense to take his chronometer to the one by whom it was made, will he commit the folly of reserving to himself a task so much more difficult?

To break or mar is easy enough; to mend or restore is quite another thing, and may even be impossible to man. For the restoration most needed—that of the masterpiece of creation—little or nothing seems to have been accomplished by ages of tinkering, with all the aid of science and philosophy and accumulated experience. Man has brought much of his own artistic

work to a marvelous degree of perfection, but has been utterly unable to restore in his own soul the lost excellence of God's work. Indeed, the very nature of the case is such as to admit of help only from God, who made and can make anew.

This making anew, this readjustment and perfectly right adjustment of all the higher faculties and functions of human beings, is the very work in which God is now most gloriously revealed to the world. Though generally called by another name, it is essentially a work of repairing, of putting again in order according to the wise and beneficent plan of our original constitution. A work which only God can do, and which he does in amazing mercy, is it not also eminently worth doing, and worthy even of God? The fact is, however low man may rate himself, and until he has completely effected his own destruction, he is placed in the divine estimate as worth the cost of repairing. So we have the Gospel, with all its gracious provisions and supernatural agencies, God himself dwelling among men, and every-where accessible through Jesus Christ.

Well may heaven rejoice and the earth be glad. Amid the wreck and ruin there still is hope. Though grievously out of order both by evil inheritance and by self-degradation, man is

not utterly worthless, for he is not yet cast away, and God appears for his reconstruction. Not one of all the race need suffer the failure of existence or the loss of himself; for creative power coming to renew is equal to the most desperate case. The same hand which guides the motions of the spheres, and keeps the universe in order, is now outstretched for higher work, and offers relief to all mankind. Commit to that hand the impaired spiritual mechanism, and who that believes in God can doubt the result? With him all things are possible, even the complete restoration of the fallen soul.

Now, shall this repairing be done, this effectual work of the master hand?

To be secured, it must of course be sought; but seeking implies something more than mere asking. In the matter of the clock or watch, the request must be accompanied by *actual delivery*, or the work can never be done. Even so, prayer avails nothing without actual personal surrender to God, or really putting ourselves into his hands. It is equally certain that this surrender of ourselves must be made just as we are, however bad our condition may be; and also that it must be a surrender, unconditional and absolute, of will and heart and life, of all we have and are. Such terms, so far from being

arbitrary, are imposed by the very nature of the case, and could not by any possibility require less than they do. Thorough repairing necessarily implies entire practical possession and control. But however inflexible the terms, they are simple enough and universally available. To every soul access is freely granted and acceptance fully assured. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

But he who comes must also remain; for the power required to restore is equally necessary to preserve. In very fact, no man is right, or ever can be right, while alienated from his Maker. His only true and orderly place is that of humble alliance with God, receiving all needed help, and rendering all possible service. For just this place human nature was constituted; here it is fitted to flourish; and nowhere else does either reason or revelation afford the slightest hope of relief for a soul, or a world, out of order.

IV.

AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

IT may seem paradoxical, but it is a fact, that some truths which are readily acknowledged are really unknown and need to be discovered. Expressed in words easily understood, they receive unhesitating assent, become familiar perhaps by frequent declaration as matters of belief, and so remain, without the slightest suspicion of any lack of comprehension, until in some mental awakening they suddenly flash upon the mind like a new discovery, and for the first time are really seen for what they are. Numerous illustrations might be adduced, but one will suffice for the present purpose; it is the great fundamental truth of Christianity, thus expressed: *God loves man.*

Only three short words—God loves man—which may be understood by a child; and yet they contain a truth which is grasped slowly, and only with the greatest difficulty—perhaps by many persons never at all. It may, indeed,

be accepted as truth, and yet be to all intents and purposes as if it were not.

If this statement is doubted, let the question be considered, How far does the acknowledged truth of God's love to man enter as a controlling force into ordinary human life? Whatever is seen and felt as real exerts from that moment, and of necessity, a constant and positive influence according to the measure of its practical importance. Thus the value of money in human affairs becomes one of the most potential facts in life, chiefly because it is seen as an ever-present, prominent, and impressive reality. If the higher truth of God's love were in like manner brought from the realm of dead abstractions, and placed in the very front of human perceptions, it would at once sway the scepter of a prince; but, because it has no such dominating influence over life, the conclusion seems inevitable that it remains only a dimly conceived and half-believed article of creed.

Why this supreme and vital truth should find such difficulty in gaining possession of the mind and life is a question for the curious. Perhaps it is because the senses furnish the chief subjects of thought, and so divert or withhold attention from truths lying below the surface of things. It may be on account of a perverse disinclination

to entertain any thoughts whatever concerning God, and an utter abandonment of all human interests above the material and sensual. But these reasons, though widely applicable, are not a sufficient explanation of all cases.

The difficulty occurs with many persons who are accustomed to think upon life's deeper problems, and who would gladly arrive at the knowledge of the truth and the possession of every excellence of character. With such it is possible that the view of the truth in question is partly obstructed by the nearer and intervening fact of personal unworthiness and demerit; or this fact may fill the whole range of vision, and so control both thought and feeling as to render a clear conception of God's love, for the time being, quite impossible. False interpretations of Scripture may also interpose like clouds to increase obscurity, and confirm the natural shrinking and incredulity of conscious unlovableness. Why should and how can God, the infinitely holy and perfect Being, love a creature so poor and insignificant, so defective in every way and sinful? And then, though he may love the race as such, or the best of the race, is it not the height of presumption to believe that one person of countless millions is distinctively the object of his love, and that one perhaps the least of all? So

the self-reasoning proceeds directly against the truth, and all the while with a desire to believe the truth. Such love—if it only were true; but no, it is too good to be true, too great and wonderful to be believed. To this questioning the only sufficient answer is the fact—the absolute fact.

With an entirely different class of persons there seems to be no difficulty whatever in receiving the truth in question. They appear not only to accept it, but to make it the only article of their religious creed, and then endeavor to draw from it conclusions favoring the widest latitude of sinful indulgence, and justifying composure or indifference in the direst perils of the soul. Because of God's love, God's will may be violated with almost entire impunity. But a little closer examination will probably discover in these persons only a vague belief, or effort to believe, combined with gross misapprehensions of the character of God and of the nature of his love. The difficulty is evidently as great here as in other cases, though of a different kind; and the real truth still remains to be discovered.

But whatever these difficulties may be, it is very certain that they arise from something in man himself, and not from any defects in the methods of revelation. Indeed, they seem to

have been anticipated here, and met at every point, and by every means possible.

Thus the Word of God carefully distinguishes between man and his sin, and reveals that love for man which seeks his highest good by deliverance from sin, his greatest evil. It also endeavors to arrest attention and awaken interest by many varied forms of appeal, and replies to every self-accusing fear with some specific promise. As if an explicit declaration of the truth were not sufficient, it is perpetually reiterated in the strongest terms, and adapted to ordinary comprehension by the most familiar and forcible illustrations. In order to give the full assurance needed, language seems to be wrought up to its very highest power of expression.

But, after all, words either written or spoken are only arbitrary signs without life; therefore, the great Word was made flesh, and divine love *lives in human form*, Jesus of Nazareth, full of grace and truth. His wonderful life speaks in facts louder and clearer than any verbal utterance, and from first to last is a concrete and perfect demonstration of the truth. Thus God's love to man, which is the great fact to be grasped, is so compressed into limited and visible forms that it may be grasped. By the very nature of things, nothing more is possible in

the revelation of the divine love as an absolute reality.

Now, if this truth is ever to gain possession of the mind, it certainly must be looked at with the best eyes one may have, and with any needed help to vision. It must be looked at, not as a mental abstraction, but as a living, present, incontrovertible fact. It must be looked at, not carelessly, or once in a life-time, but with closest scrutiny, frequently and habitually. Let it thus be kept before the mind, and treated as a reality of some presumable significance, and it will soon hold its place and begin to assert its power among other acknowledged realities—but never otherwise.

Such intellectual possession, however, is only a part of the process of discovery. The truth which has been properly looked at may now be easily looked into, and all its hidden riches will be gradually disclosed.

God loves man! What does it mean? Perhaps he will help the feeble comprehension. But the question itself can never be exhausted. God's *love*—has it any meaning concerning human character, the heart, the motives, the conduct? Stop, and look, and see. Is not the truth now unfolding to the gaze? Further, has it any practical bearing upon the affairs of life

and of death, giving aught of light or comfort or strength?

So let the questioning proceed every day of life, with open heart and mind intent, and God's light shall come with God's love to complete the great discovery.

V.

THE INDISPENSABLE REQUISITE.

IN every work there is a certain chief part or staple, without which all the rest amounts to nothing. Thus a ship, in order to be a ship proper, must float in the water. If built upon stocks from which it can not be launched, or if cast high and dry upon the beach whence it can not be removed, or if so constructed that when once in the water it will sink to the bottom, it may have the form and appointments of a ship, but can never serve its purpose. The merchant must have a market for his goods, or he is a merchant only in name. Agriculture is a failure where production is impossible. The starving man is not relieved from danger until he partakes of suitable food. The patient derives no benefit from the skill of the physician unless his case is reported for treatment.

In these and thousands of other instances in every-day life, it is the province of common sense to discern what is really essential, the main condition of success, and to keep it steadily in

view. Because of such useful service, this kind of sense—whether common or uncommon—is justly held in high repute; and the man who would dispense with its aid is sure to come to grief. So it is in ordinary affairs, at least.

But is the case changed the moment we pass to the higher affairs of the soul? Surely, where the greatest possible interests are involved, the knowledge of necessary conditions rises to supreme importance. Failure here is failure complete and eternal. But while the exercise of common sense is demanded in religion far more than elsewhere, it has the infallible direction of divine truth, and need never mistake the incidental and subordinate for the chief and indispensable.

Unquestionably, the main requisite is *direct personal communication with the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is to every soul of man what the water is to the ship, or the market to the merchandise, or production to agriculture, or food to the famishing, or medical aid to the sick. That is to say, such communication is absolutely necessary to spiritual interests, and without it all else is wholly ineffectual. From the very nature of things, and by the formal appointment of God for all humanity, it is the indispensable condition—*sine qua non*.

Thus the soul is brought into those intimate relations to God, for which it was expressly constituted, and in which alone it finds true life and fruitfulness, the supply of its wants, and the remedy for its disease. Christ is all and has all that we need for the accomplishment of the great end of our existence. As responsible human beings passing on to a future state, we succeed with him, and fail without him.

His various offices and manifold relations, language is burdened to express. He is at once the sacrifice and the Priest; the humble servant and the mighty Conqueror; the confidential friend and the sovereign Lord; the door into the fold and the Shepherd of the sheep; the way to be followed, the truth to be learned, and the life to be lived; the great Physician, Teacher, Counselor, Advocate, Lawgiver, and Judge; the Son of man and the Son of God,—having all power, and present alike in earth and heaven. But all expression fails; mere words can never convey the mighty meaning of “God manifest in the flesh.” What he is, and what he can do for every one who comes to him, must be learned by coming and abiding for evermore.

Of course, this coming and abiding is strictly and necessarily personal; it can not be done by one for another. It may receive aid from others

in the form of invitation, persuasion, counsel, and encouragement, but must be performed by each one for himself, as being entirely his own action, originated and sustained from within.

This independent and voluntary self-action can not be too strongly insisted upon. The solution of the problem requires the actual contact and intercommunication of two living and acting persons, the man to be healed and Christ, the only Healer. The body might be brought; the soul must *come*. It must come of its own choice, in the use of its own powers, and thus remain. The necessity of such individual action is sufficiently obvious, though it is often overlooked and practically disregarded, under one pretext and another.

But the right thus to come is also strictly personal; and, like the so-called natural rights, it is inalienable. While it must be exercised in order to any personal benefit, it can never be transferred to another. Happily, there is no lack. Every human being, as a separate and distinct individual—one as much as another—may claim the right by virtue of divine gift, and in like manner receive all its benefits. In this respect all are equal; “for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him;

for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

If communication with Christ is to be personal as a matter of necessity and right, it is to be so in the fullest sense; that is, direct, in one's own proper person, without interference of any kind whatsoever. As the privilege of such approach and intercourse is the greatest and most sacred of human rights, it should be most jealously guarded and maintained. Like all other rights, it is exposed to human encroachments, whether made of set purpose or wholly undesigned.

For centuries a corrupt form of Christianity has interposed the mediation of saints and of the Virgin Mary, the unauthorized offices of the priest and the arrogant assumptions of the Pope, the imposing splendor of its ritual and the delusive merit of mere forms and ordinances. Whatever may be the pretexts of such action, it certainly is an impious usurpation of divine prerogative, a gross infringement of religious liberty, an utter perversion of the proper functions of a Christian Church.

But under better auspices, where such things are held in abhorrence, there still is danger of some unwarrantable and fatal interference. Even in its best estate, the Church may unwittingly

come between the souls of men and Christ, and in effect, though without intention, obstruct rather than facilitate communication with him. To some extent this is done whenever the Church unduly magnifies its own importance, attracts special attention to itself, and favors the common tendency to stop short of Christ in a merely formal membership. The attractive minister often wins converts only to himself, and so far fails in his work. Another is professional in manner, or impertinently officious, and likewise fails. In all effort for the spiritual welfare of men, unless the strictest regard be paid to the necessity and right of direct communication with Christ, it is certain there can be no true success.

But to provide against the common liabilities and difficulties of the case, one fact must be made prominent and impressive as an absolute verity. The Lord Jesus is present and accessible to every human being, requiring on his part no mediation, receiving all who come directly to him, and doing "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." So in every life there may be infallibly secured its true place, highest privilege, and most indispensable requisite—intimate relationship with Christ, the vital union of the human with the divine.

VI.

SAFETY IN TEMPTATION.

EVIL abounds in our world, and is propagated by solicitations artfully varied to suit all circumstances and all persons. It never fully succeeds except by gaining consent of the will, and therefore continually aims at this one point, whatever may be the methods employed. As it is always bold and aggressive—seeking new victims with tireless energy, and accepting even the smallest advantage—no one can hope to be altogether exempt from its solicitations in the present life.

But, though entire exemption is out of the question, is not safety possible? May we not be absolutely secure against the triumphs of evil over ourselves? Undoubtedly, if we use the means provided. The Lord Jesus himself “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;” and “he is able to succor them that are tempted.” This aid is easily available, while it is fully assured by the promise: “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above

that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape." No plea of necessity can, therefore, ever be made for consenting to evil. Like the Master, the disciple may stand secure against all assaults.

Are there not, however, different *degrees* of safety? For example, the temptation to partake of wine, or other alcoholic stimulants, may be very powerful, as when urged by an intimate friend, or exacted by prevailing custom. Under its influence the "total abstinence" man is less likely to be affected than the "moderate drinker," who has no convictions or resolutions to fortify him against it; and one who has never tasted the cup is certainly more secure than the reformed inebriate, whose appetite is only slumbering. In the one case principle is the safeguard; in the other, lack of inclination. When both are combined the highest degree of safety is reached—supposing, of course, the temptation itself to be unavoidable. So, also, in actual temptations of every kind. Safety ranges all the way from the point of difficult, yet successful, resistance to that of triumph without conflict.

There are also differences in the temptations themselves, in respect not only of kind, but of relative strength. *A* may be greatly affected by a temptation which *B* would hardly notice, and

vice versa; while neither would have any difficulty in resisting many temptations which have proved fatal to others. These differences arise from the very nature of temptations, as solicitations specially adapted to different temperaments and circumstances—their actual strength consisting in their adaptation. Where there is no response, no answering feeling, but rather settled opposition and disinclination, there is little or no power of temptation. So we see again that, whatever the temptation may be, the question of safety is determined, to a great extent, by something *in the condition* of the person tempted.

Now, we may ask, is it possible for any one to be in a condition altogether unfavorable to temptations of every kind—a state where there shall be no responsive inclinations whatever? Or, supposing natural inclinations always to exist, may they become *wholly unresponsive to evil*? This is no merely speculative question, but one of deepest practical import, relating to the experience and safety of all who think it worth while to resist temptation.

Probably the answer would have to be in the negative, but for one fact. Evil is opposition to God, and is always *generically* the same, whatever may be its specific differences; that is to say, it is the same in its real nature or essence,

though differing in its particular forms or manifestations. Resistance, therefore, to any evil, *because it is evil*, implies resistance to every other evil. But Christianity is a scheme of just such resistance; it is essentially a system of uncompromising antagonism to all evil as such; it comes to restore man to God by resisting and overthrowing every thing which is against God.

For this purpose may we not believe it to be practically sufficient? Is Christianity, either in whole or in part, a failure? If it ever seems to be so, it must be because it is not fully accepted. It has the most perfect adaptation to its avowed purpose, the conquest of evil, because it embodies the wisdom of God; and it can not be ineffective, for it is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

This is the important fact in our inquiry; for what would be otherwise quite impossible may now be easily possible in every case. To obtain the true answer, therefore, we have only to ascertain how far this salvation goes.

Finding man under the power of evil, the Gospel awakens him to a sense of his danger, by consent effects his release, and puts him in an attitude of pledged resistance, intrenched and fortified by the strongest principles. But is this all? The man thus saved is still exposed to

temptations, which, perhaps, are more subtle and persistent than ever before. Has he nothing but good principles and firm resolutions with which to maintain his new position? Where are his inclinations, how do they stand, in the assaults of temptation? This is really the critical point in his condition. If they are still favorable to evil, he is like a fortress containing traitors, who are ready at any moment to open the gate to the enemy. Now, what does the Gospel do for him right here, where his danger and need are the greatest?

Happily for him and all others, this is the very place of the Spirit's work. It is in the renewal of the heart, primarily and especially, that the power of God is employed unto salvation. Here an entirely new *régime* is established, in which the love of God is supreme. Dangerous inclinations are subdued and "brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." The natural faculties and propensities are not destroyed, but are simply put in their proper place and made to serve their true purpose, under a new and right disposing force. They still respond to legitimate incitements, or solicitations; but by virtue of their subjection, and just to the extent of their subjection, they cease to respond to evil. The change wrought by the

Holy Spirit is so great and marvelous, so radical and thorough, that the Scriptures can hardly find language strong enough to describe it. But this change is particularly and essentially a change in respect to evil; and, beginning with the inclinations, it is completed only when they are brought into a state wholly unfavorable to all the solicitations of evil.

Such is God's method of succoring those who are tempted—not so much by outward interposition as by inward qualification; not by preventing temptation, but by giving ability to overcome it. If temptations are specially adapted to the various peculiarities of temperament, so also is this help of God; and it is equally effective in every case, because it is expressly provided against all evil, as such.

Of course, this help is for all persons alike, in all circumstances where duty may call them; but it must be sought according to the terms of the promise, by fervent prayer, with resolute watchfulness against sin, and entire consecration to God. When thus sought it is never withheld, and is always so abundant in measure that it soon decides the contest. But it should be sought and obtained not merely as a temporary relief in the hour of temptation, but as a settled condition of the soul, a permanent provision of

power against all possible surprises. When God abides with us continually, according to his promise, "working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," then, and only then, do we reach the highest degree of safety in temptation.

VII.

THE MASTER PASSION.

I N ordinary human nature the various passions are somewhat evenly balanced, each having sufficient strength to assert itself on occasion. Frequently, in conflict one with another, they rule by turns, according to the favor of circumstances, or the nature of external influences. As the temporary incitement is withdrawn or changed, the passion which depended upon it subsides, or gives place to another. Thus, unless some competent regulating power has been firmly established, the internal government of human nature is subject to constant fluctuation, as in a state of anarchy.

But there are doubtless many instances in which some one passion acquires supreme and permanent control. This may be true of the natural appetites, and of certain habits, like liquor-drinking and opium-eating, which involve more or less of physical disease; but it is equally true of purely mental affections. In the case of the miser, the love of money becomes absorbing;

it takes entire possession of the soul, crushing out all other aspirations and desires; it even holds in check the appetites, so that he suffers the pangs of hunger rather than expend his hoarded treasures. Ambition affords a similar example of the practical subjection, if not the complete extinction, of all opposing desires. It has sometimes obtained such absolute supremacy as to override and apparently abolish conscience, natural affection, and even the ordinary instincts of humanity. The same may be said also of jealousy and revenge.

Such passions are terrible masters; for they usurp a place to which they are not entitled, and rule only by subjecting or destroying every good and noble impulse. The dominion of any one of them is a relentless despotism, worse, if possible, than the anarchy for which it is substituted.

Happily for the world, the ruling passion is not always evil. Though it may not be of the highest order of excellence, yet so far as it is good it fosters and employs the good, while it suppresses the evil. Thus, for instance, the simple love of knowledge is often so strong as easily to overcome the allurements, not only of vice, but of ease, wealth, pleasure, and power. It has held many a strong and impulsive nature

to the steady pursuit of some important inquiry, through a life-time of toil and self-denial. Combined with other motives, it has led to explorations and discoveries involving the greatest personal sacrifices, and has been the chief inspiration of enterprises in which such men as Kane in the Arctic Seas, and Livingstone in Central Africa, have cheerfully encountered almost incredible hardships and perils.

But in every case, where extraordinary energy and enthusiasm are manifested in persistent and absorbing devotion to one pursuit, we may be sure that some power, either good or bad, has gained dominion of the soul. Whatever this master passion may be, if it is really such, it is certainly able to hold in abeyance, or effectually silence, all the rest—except as they enter its service.

Now, suppose the love of God to be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and we have human nature endowed with an entirely new passion—the highest and noblest in the universe.

And this passion is an essential characteristic of true Christians—is necessary to constitute them such. Imparted by divine agency, it consists not only in love *to* God, but in God's love *itself*; it is the same in kind, and thus makes us

“partakers of the divine nature.” It is clearly distinct from any natural human love; for it is superadded, as so much of God in man. Lost from the soul by original sin, it is now restored through the atonement of Christ, by the work of the Spirit, on the simple conditions prescribed in the Gospel; and it supplies the one great natural deficiency of the human constitution. It is this which lifts up the creature into the likeness and fellowship of the Creator, and constitutes the distinguishing glory of the Gospel of Christ. Certainly no greater gift is in the power of God himself, for it is the giving of his own most glorious attribute.

With such views of the nature and origin of the vital element of Christian character, can any one be in doubt concerning its rightful place and power in the soul?

In him from whom it is derived it possesses infinite might and majesty; for “God is love,” and “commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” This same love is supreme in the whole life of heaven, the master passion of angels and of the spirits of just men made perfect. Shall it be any thing less in the hearts of saints on earth? If it is not the master passion at the very beginning of the Christian life, should it not speedily

become so? Our likeness to God consists not only in the possession, but in the predominance, of this love. As with him it is a ruling force, so it must be with us—dominating all other passions, and having absolute control of the heart and the life. In this very measure, as a master passion, it is fully provided for by the work of the Spirit, vehemently urged upon us in the Scriptures, and is manifestly the will of God concerning us. Its proper place and power, therefore, admit of no question among the disciples of Christ.

But while no other passion can present similar claim to supremacy—the claim of divine origin and authority; no other has such marvelous adaptations and effects.

Love seems to be the very power needed to restore harmony to the soul, by subduing the natural passions, and establishing over them a just, beneficent, and stable government. For this it is abundantly competent. Let it be enthroned within, and immediately it puts all other powers and faculties in their true place, and to their appropriate service. Reigning in strict accordance with the original and perfect constitution of man, it prevents irregularities, excesses, and all other evils; while it secures healthful life, right activity, and the fullness of peace and

joy. Now, the appetites are subject to law; love of money is appreciation of divine bounty; ambition takes the direction of excellence and usefulness; revenge is the demoniac clothed, and sitting at the feet of Jesus; love of knowledge is the disciple seeking the means of better service; and love divine is sovereign alone. This is God's own government for human nature—his kingdom in the soul—and heaven begun below.

Here, then, is our relief—simple, practicable, and all-sufficient. What we have seen to be possible with other passions, surely, is not less so with this. If any mere usurper, like the love of gold, can obtain such mastery as easily to overcome all opposition from within and without, how much more can the legitimate sovereign of the soul, when re-enforced by the omnipotent Spirit?

And in our present earthly condition, what can be more desirable, or more important to our true welfare? Every interest of character and destiny is at stake. Some mighty moral force is made imperatively necessary by the strength of natural propensities, by the presence of insidious temptations, and by all the difficulties which beset our appointed work. In this extremity of our need, God is certainly incapable of mocking

us by holding out expectations which can never be realized; and what he has provided is actually and amply sufficient for all demands. To subdue our enemies, to succeed in our work, and to enjoy the fullness of the great salvation, we have only to give place to the love of God as our one real and perpetual master passion.

VIII.

UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

IS this the natural condition of human life? Are difficulties appointed in the very constitution of things? So it seems.

The great sea divides the lands of the globe, and is trackless, treacherous, and full of perils to navigation. Over countries thickly inhabited Winter holds relentless reign during a large part of every year, and demands the tribute of diligent preparation. When Winter yields to Spring, briars and thorns appear as the spontaneous growth of the soil, and are sure to keep possession until displaced by the hand of toil,

The shelter and clothing required for every season are found only in their raw materials—in the possibilities of woods and rocks and folds and fields. The choicest treasures of the earth, like the fabulous riches of Arabian story, are accessible only to the “Open sesame” of patient industry. Pearls are concealed in natural caskets beneath the waves; diamonds are scattered unrecognized among the sands on the shore; gold,

silver, and other precious or useful metals, are locked up in the vaults of the mountains, or mingled in fragments with the soil of the valleys; while the coal which warms and moves the world, and the oil for its machinery and light, must be broken from original packages in the rocks, or drawn from reservoirs far down in the nethermost depths of the earth.

But this is only the beginning of labor. The difficulties encountered in the collection of materials are repeated in varying forms through the whole process of manufacture and use—everywhere imposing the necessity of effort and skill.

It might have been quite otherwise. The power required to make the world as it is was sufficient to have established an entirely different condition of things. The sea might have been without dangers, and the Winter without discomfort or dearth. Houses, finished and furnished, might have been made to grow like trees; and towns and cities, like forests. Garments of every style and quality, like fruits and flowers, might have been a simple product of nature. Instead of the full corn in the ear—to be gathered and threshed and ground and baked—the earth might have brought forth loaves of bread ready for the table. All things precious might have been displayed in profusion

upon the surface; and all things necessary, fully prepared for immediate use. It was not impossible for God to make a world in which the inhabitants should be wholly exempt from enforced or difficult exertion.

But this has not been done; and it is well. Even with our limited faculties it is easy to see, in part at least, the wisdom of the present order of things.

The sea has always been to maritime nations a vast gymnasium for the training of athletes, a field of difficulties specially adapted to their intellectual and physical development. The Winter of the Temperate Zone has its ample compensations in the prudence, vigor, and enterprise which it fosters, as is fully attested by the manifest superiority of the inhabitants of such regions over those of the tropics. Forests and rocks may contend with agriculture for the possession of the soil; but the places where such is the case have often become famous for the production of great men, made great by the discipline of early hardship and toil.

Necessity is the mother not only of invention, but of all activity and development. The distrustful anxiety concerning food, clothing, and shelter,—it is this which is hurtful, and not the sturdy effort to secure them. Indeed, the very

effort which is required in procuring, under difficulties, the things really needed is itself our greatest need; for it is indispensable to the promotion of the health and strength of both body and mind. Take away the spur of want, withdraw the challenge of natural difficulties, absolve man from all necessity of exertion, thus leaving him to the enervating influence of luxurious indolence, and he would soon be good for nothing.

The truth is, the world was made for man, and not man for the world. Human life on earth is a school, and not the least important of its discipline is labor under difficulties.

The practical and successful men of the world accept the situation. Instead of idly bemoaning the inevitable difficulties of business life, they regard it as a part of their business to grapple with them and leave them vanquished behind. They have no toleration for disheartening fears, weak complaints, irresolute efforts, and consequent failures. They act upon the sensible maxim to take things as they are and make the best of them. Indeed, they often find the chief zest of their employments in the strength and joy of struggle and triumph, in the perfect mastery of difficulties the most formidable. With such views of work, is it any wonder that they succeed? Laying all their plans and adjust-

ing all their forces with special reference to obstructions, they tunnel the mountains, bring down the hills, fill up the valleys, span the rivers, reclaim the arid deserts, hold back the waters of the sea, penetrate the underground world for its wealth, open a way for thought through the channels of the deep, send forth floating palaces in the face of the tempest, and exercise dominion over the earth by the right of legitimate conquest.

Such results were evidently contemplated in the first commission given to the representative man; the earth was to be *subdued* by human agency. The subjection of matter to mind was to be completed when mind should once prove its supremacy by an enterprise and skill equal to the task. So, after all, the difficulties of our natural condition are only relative; they lose their character as difficulties when met by a sufficient force. Absolute difficulties—that is, the insurmountable—are found only in a course of opposition to God, and never when acting under his commission, and in accord with his natural and moral law.

And herein is a great lesson for Christian workers. Difficulties, so called, abound over the whole field. They confront every project, and beset every undertaking, which has in view,

directly or indirectly, the real spiritual good of ourselves or of our fellows. What then? Are they not found in all labor under the sun? And shall the men of this world always be wiser in their generation than the children of light? Shall we ourselves be wiser in mere worldly business—more bold, energetic, and skillful—than in the supreme work of the Christian life? To resist temptation, subdue self, acquire all possible knowledge, help the needy in body or soul, bear with the infirmities of our associates, overcome evil of every kind with good, and aid effectually in subduing the world unto Christ—this is indeed a stupendous work, far exceeding all physical conquests; but it is not impossible, for God leads the way. To succeed is simply to meet and overcome difficulties.

IX.

THE ONE GREAT WORK.

DULY regulated work is both a privilege and a duty. At the very beginning it was ordained for the good of man. All his faculties of soul and body required the employment which was furnished in the ample field of a newly created world. Even at his highest estate, before the exclusion from Eden, he was not left in idleness; and subsequently he was cursed not with labor itself, but only with its incidents of extreme difficulty and severity.

The law enjoining labor of some kind upon all who are capable of it still remains in force, unchanged in its beneficent purpose and moral obligation. It is the order of the universe, from the Creator and Sovereign himself down to the humblest of his intelligent creatures. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said the divine Man, who came to fulfill the law and make it honorable; and all men are bound to follow the great example. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day."

So all true work is by the appointment of God, who has sent every man into the world and given him his day. Into this happy fellowship with himself and his Son, Jesus Christ, God would admit the whole human family. In all the provisions and requirements of his Word, and through all the administration of his moral government, he has this end in view; and at the last he will bring every work into judgment, and "render to every man according to his deeds." Christianity, throughout, is a system of work regulated by the will of God, fully furnished with the needed help, and covering the whole period, together with every possible interest, of human life.

The work thus required is unquestionably of vast proportions, and of an almost infinite variety. It is so divided and subdivided that every one of all the busy multitudes may find something to do which is suited to his capacity and needed by the world. Something for every one to do is a fundamental necessity provided for in the established order of things. It is required alike for the benefit of the individual and for the general good of the race. No provision is anywhere made for idleness; and no life is left without a suitable calling.

Great mistakes are doubtless made in the

selection of employment, and many inventions are sought out to escape it altogether; but the common sense of mankind accepts the obvious truth that there is some part of the world's work specifically assigned to each individual, and for which he is held responsible. To find and do that part, whatever it may be, is to fulfill the purpose and insure the success of life.

But, in all the vast variety offered for selection, is there any work which is so comprehensive, and which so far outranks every other, that it may be called the *one great work for every human being*? If so, what is it?

The first necessity of man is food. On this depend life, growth, happiness, and the very power to work. All food for the body is derived directly or indirectly from the soil. To produce it was necessarily the first and chief employment. Adam was a gardener; Abel, a keeper of flocks; Cain, a tiller of the field. Patriarchs and prophets were shepherds and herdsmen and plowmen. The great question of the nations, "What shall we eat, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" is answered in their labors. However numerous and diversified may be the employments of men, they have in view primarily the supply of physical necessities, the support of life. Every form of business is dependent

upon that which produces food, and which may therefore be called the first in the order of nature.

Now, if man were no more than an animal, then "getting a living" by producing or obtaining food would be properly, as it often is actually, the one great work. But, as the body is only the instrument of the soul, the support of physical life is the means to an end infinitely higher. We labor to live, but we live to labor for something more than a living. If the work necessary to procure bread is the first in the order of nature, it is the first in an ascending series which culminates in the one great work, namely, the *ministering of food to the soul* for the development and maintenance of the highest life possible to man.

What is this work but learning and teaching "the truth as it is in Jesus?"

To the multitude who sought him because they "did eat of the loaves and were filled," he said, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. I am the bread of life. He that

cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "He that eateth of this bread shall live forever."

Here, then, is the one great need of the world, to provide for which became the work of Him "who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, and hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." The provisions thus made, and the words thus spoken, are as necessary for the soul as is food for the body, and serve a similar purpose; for "they are spirit and they are life."

But, if labor is required for the meat which perisheth, it is equally necessary for that which endureth unto everlasting life. God gives of the latter as of the former, but only to those who seek earnestly, actively, continually. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," seems to have application to the soul as well as to the body, and probably for the same reason. It is certain, in the one case as in the other, that various difficulties are experienced and must be overcome. To search out the truth, to know it and live by it, is a work which in many instances involves even more of effort than is required in procuring a support from the fruits of the earth. At any rate, it is never successfully accomplished

by the careless or the indolent. Nor can it be done through hired servants. Whatever aid it may receive from the ministry of instruction, the labor of learning and appropriating the truth is strictly personal, a something for every one to do, and an essential part of his most important work.

The counterpart of learning is teaching. It is the necessary antecedent, and should be the invariable consequent. Every one who has learned the truth of life is bound to make it known, just so far as he has ability and opportunity. "Freely ye have received; freely give." "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him;" and how much more when "the people perish for lack of knowledge" wickedly withheld. To furnish relief, in such a case, is to render the greatest possible service, and the very service enjoined in the Gospel.

Next to receiving the truth, its communication is the distinguishing work of the Christian life and calling. It belongs to the minister, the Sunday-school teacher, the heads of families; but not to these alone. Every man is to teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," until all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest.

In some way, and by some means, every

disciple of the Great Teacher may show forth the life-giving truth, and so has the privilege and responsibility of bearing a part in the one great work.

X.

OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

THE world has doubtless grown to be very learned and wise. It has attained a variety and amount of knowledge which becomes almost appalling when estimated by stupendous libraries, the accumulations of many centuries, and by the countless issues of the press representing the current increase of learning. But the world which knows so much is the vast aggregate of mind, a composite body existing in many different parts widely distributed. No one man is the repository of all this knowledge, or can hope in the longest life to obtain of it more than a very small modicum. Of course, the diligent student may acquire from books and lectures an outline of almost every branch; but the mastery of details he must leave to the specialist, or secure it for himself in some chosen specialty.

Probably the actual difference in the amount of knowledge among men in civilized communities is not so great as is commonly supposed. It is a difference of kind rather than of quantity.

The illiterate man, like some of the trappers and guides on our western frontier, may nevertheless be in no mean sense a learned man; and his rude learning may be very necessary to supplement that of the scientific explorer. So it is in every department of life. The principle of compensation enters into the very warp and woof of society, No one is so learned that he may not learn something from every one he meets. In the most favored cases, more or less of ignorance may be fairly presumed; and, while it is not disreputable if acknowledged, it properly leaves every man in the attitude of a humble learner, with a great number of questions open to further inquiry. Even his favorite subjects may receive new light from the contributions of his neighbor, or from his own closer investigations.

Such is the extent of knowledge to be attained, and so limited are the individual possessions, that very few questions can be regarded as absolutely settled for all time. Every thing of vital interest is subject to frequent recurrence in the discussions of men, and is not in the least likely to share the fate of a fossil.

Another fact in this endless round of inquiry has at first an aspect almost of sadness and discouragement. With all the stores of knowledge accumulated by incredible toil through the course

of ages, every human being must begin at the beginning and go through the laborious process of learning, each for himself.

The little fellow who came into the world yesterday morning at the house of our neighbor is of course a wonderful baby, as all babies are, but he is none the wiser for having his birth in this latter half of the nineteenth century. His delighted parents are intelligent Christians in comfortable circumstances, and will doubtless provide for their first-born the latest improvements in the paraphernalia of babyhood and, thenceforward, all the facilities of development belonging to this progressive age. The new-comer may some day become a bishop, or a president, or a railway king, or a famous philosopher; but just now he is as ignorant as if he had been born before the flood. Whatever advantages he may have over the antediluvian baby, it is certain that he has every thing yet to learn,—the use of eyes and hands and feet and all other parts of the body, and then the more complex and wonderful processes of the indwelling soul. It avails something that others have trodden the path before him, who may now lend a helping hand; but he must walk with his own feet, or not go at all. The alphabet and multiplication-table are made ready for his advent—

thanks to the learning of the past—but then he must learn them as all his progenitors have done. He enters upon the struggles of life with a sound constitution and the best of all inherited qualities; but he is not endowed by hereditary transmission with the whole stock of modern ideas. The world's learning must all be learned again. Its riches of thought can be acquired only by thinking. Its anxious questionings and struggles, defeats and triumphs, are to be repeated in this new life.

So, for every one born of the race the problem is continually renewed; and, whatever aids may be furnished, its solution is the ever recurring work of our world. "Over and over again," is the never-ending refrain of the song of the cradle.

If it is over and over again with each new candidate for learning, it is so in some measure with the different periods of the same life. Memory often suffers a lapse, or becomes indistinct. Things once learned are buried away under the accumulations of years, like fossils hidden in the rock, and so to be of present use must be learned again. The philosopher who claimed to have forgotten more than his critic ever knew, seems to have understood the common liability to loss of knowledge. Not that

every thing once learned may be lost, nor that any thing is forgotten altogether and absolutely, but that memory, in order to make its stores available, frequently requires the same thing over and over again.

Besides, where there is no fault of memory, it often happens that questions once regarded as settled are found to change with advancing life. They will not remain settled; but, having still a hold upon life, they claim the benefit of the larger experience and the riper understanding. Their reconsideration under more favorable circumstances is certainly a mark of wisdom; and the person or the nation that refuses it, and insists upon treating any important question as dead and buried, is not only shut off from all safe progress, but is hopelessly moribund. Indeed, many of the so-called new questions, now set forth as the living issues of the day, are only old questions under new forms—fossils, or what seemed to be fossils, strangely brought to life again. Nor is it so strange, after all; for, as truth never dies, it has the power of perpetual reappearance, coming to every generation and every life, early and late, again and again.

But perhaps the most significant fact of all is found in the nature and purpose of all truth. It is essentially practical. It has something to do

with men as they actually exist in the world, and is intimately connected with all their interests and labors. To meet its full design, it must not only be recognized and comprehended in the consideration of abstract questions, but also become incorporated with our very being and embodied in the whole round of human activities.

"Is the sermon done?" one was asked, on returning early from church.

"No," he replied; "it remains yet to be done."

The most important questions are never effectually settled until they are "well settled in life." Until they pass through the understanding into the affections and practice of all whom they concern, they fall short of their proper consummation. But truth must not fail, and so it must be recurrent.

For such reasons many questions, though old as the world, need to be kept continually before the people. They should be brought forward in the discussions of the pulpit and platform and press, until they shall be heartily accepted and reduced to practice by the last man of the race. But do hearers and readers demand something new and fresh? What is old to one may be new to another, even among well-informed adults;

and what is well known to adults is certain to have the charm of novelty to children. Must we have live questions? If, as is commonly understood, they are questions suited to individual tastes and likings, they may be either good or bad, elevating or demoralizing. Corrupt tastes demand a corrupt literature, and find life in nothing else. But if live questions are such as relate to the real interests of human life in all its departments, then they are the practical and profitable, whether old or new, and are worthy of repetition until profit is realized in practice.

Just such questions are as numerous and frequently recurring as the wants of human life. Contentment, for instance, will always need essays in words and deeds, because nine-tenths of the world have not yet learned the art, and it is well worth learning. The brevity of life is brought to mind at every death-bed and burial, but is as often forgotten in the whirl of business and pleasure. The supreme excellence of wisdom and virtue will require eloquent vindication until men shall cease their follies and no longer give ear to the words of the devil. These and all other vital questions should indeed be treated with all the earnestness of real life, and with the directness and freshness of new occasions and applications; but they can not safely be con-

signed to the oblivion of obsolete books, or the burial of present neglect.

Until the end of time, the whole work of teaching and learning must be done over and over again.

XI.

IN REAL LIFE.

THAT is the very place where errors and evils have long prevailed, and have wrought their most disastrous results. From the beginning, the time when they were first believed, they have entered into the affairs, formed the characters, and controlled the lives and destinies of men. The truth has, therefore, a great mission to accomplish. Unquestionably it has great power also, and is the only sufficient remedy for the world's evils. But in order to succeed it must be known and received by the mind, where its power may be felt. To secure such place is the object of the great struggle which has been going on with varying results through all the ages.

Will the truth ultimately triumph? If so, it must be through the observance of certain indispensable conditions, and especially by the practical adaptation of its methods.

If we desire to know what that adaptation requires, we may learn something from opposing

methods. Errors, lies, and wrongs have never yet refused the use of words, or been lacking in brazen effrontery in the verbal denial of the truth, but they seem to depend chiefly upon other more effective agencies. Having comparatively little to do with formal statements and remote abstractions, they obtain possession of human beings, and thus come out in living forms with an unlimited power of propagation.

Let evil be shut out from the sight of the world; let it appear no longer in the associations and pleasures and business of men; let it be confined to occasional discourses and writings as a matter mainly theoretical, and it would certainly be far less formidable than now. But such banishment from real life it stoutly resists, for this is the fortress of its power. Under many a fair disguise, and with specious insinuations, it continues to live in men and among men, making use of their passions, gaining strength with their growth, becoming established in their habits, appropriating to itself their powers of mind and body, entering into their labors and recreations, spreading out with their influence in society, and perhaps even claiming the credit of their virtues. In short, the great power of evil is the power of the living man in whom it has become incarnate.

Such immense advantage in the contest can not safely be surrendered to the enemy. Truth must also appear in living forms, as a veritable incarnation, or fail of the mastery. It doubtless has need of words in the sphere of words; but it must match force with force, deeds with deeds, and life with life. In every part of the field it must be visible, tangible, an unquestionable reality, a living and active force, its own irrefutable demonstration. But to have this power, it requires absolute possession of human beings. It must live in them and among them, move their hearts, form their characters, control their actions, and appropriate their entire influence in all the relations and affairs of life.

“’T is a consummation most devoutly to be wished,” for this reason, if for no other, that it brings truth into the very field to be won, and joins the issue with something like equal advantage. So long as error stands out in every place before the eyes of men, and propagates itself by all the agencies of real life, it is certain that truth must do the same, or remain comparatively unknown and powerless.

But we are not indebted to the adversary for the suggestion of effective methods. If “the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light,” it is the fault of

the latter, for they have the example and instruction of Infinite Wisdom. God evidently never designed that his truth should go forth clad only in arbitrary symbols. The giving of the law was accompanied by the most impressive outward demonstrations of power and majesty and authority. Afterward, for many centuries, great truths were kept before the people in the significant furniture and ceremonies of the Tabernacle and Temple. Events also were made to speak with no uncertain sound, and with a force which men could feel.

But still more was required. In order to be fully believed on in the world, "God was manifest in the flesh." "The Word was made flesh," and dwelt among men, that they might behold his glory, full of grace and truth. When he withdrew his body from the world he made ample provision for the emergency. "The Spirit of truth" was given to abide with and dwell in all who should receive him,—to be incarnate, not in one person or place only, but in multiplied millions throughout the world. This is God's provision for all time, the written Word and the living Church,—the latter a transcript of the former in characters which can be read every-where and without spectacles.

That this method of setting forth the truth

has the authority of divine provision, is sufficient reason for its acceptance. But, besides, it is found to work well, not only because it meets a similar method on the part of evil, but because it is expressly adapted to the nature and-condition of men.

“Seeing is believing.” Nothing is so powerful to convince as the logic of a loving life. Put the Christian graces into animated syllogisms clothed with flesh, and the conclusion has a force which the caviler can neither gainsay nor resist. Sermons without words may be preached everywhere, and they are always eloquent and effective. Human nature is such that it is attracted and interested and influenced by deeds more than by words, by facts more than by principles, by sympathy more than by argument. The space outside of churches is larger than inside; the time of the week-days is longer than the Sabbath; there is more light than sound, more seeing than hearing, in the world; and the nearest point from which to reach men is the place where they live—the home circle and “all outdoors.” The appointed method, of combining deeds with words, exactly suits the case, and covers the whole ground.

Here, then, is the obvious duty of all Christians, as they are scattered abroad throughout

the world, namely, by the personal manifestation of the truth as it is in Jesus, to make that truth omnipresent, and thus omnipotent in real life.

XII.

THE CHRIST-LIFE.

OF late years, volume after volume has come from the press, and still they come, bearing each the title, "The Life of Christ." All of them—even those written by his enemies, like Strauss and Rénan—serve the purpose of drawing attention to the facts of the wonderful life, and of leading to a more careful study of the simple and beautiful narratives of the Evangelists. Of course, only the latter have the authority of inspiration, and, as the testimony of eye-witnesses under divine direction, must ever remain the standard biography.

But there is another life of Christ, which is of far greater value and importance than any uninspired writings, and also is necessary to supplement the records of the Gospels. It is issued in separate editions, of a single volume each, but unlimited as to their possible number. It is bound in various sizes and styles; but is always essentially the same. It appears in many different languages, but needs no translation, and

may be read with equal facility by all men, and in all the tongues of the earth. In fact, it is neither written nor printed, but actually reproduced—the life of Christ as he still lives in his true disciples.

This form of publication has immense advantages over every other—advantages peculiar to itself. It is not confined to library shelves, nor kept on parlor tables. It may be read by the aged without spectacles, and by the young without knowledge of letters. It requires for its perusal no scholarly leisure, no habits of study, no effort of any kind. Like the light on the candlestick, or the city set on a hill, or the flowers and the sunshine, it is seen and felt by virtue of its own presence and power. It is the life of Christ in human editions, going about in the home, on the street, in the market-place, every-where, speaking and working and known in the every-day life of the world.

If the Church properly constitutes such an animated circulating library, it is of the first importance that each volume be as complete and perfect as possible. The main question relates, not to the incidental matters of size and style, but to the genuineness of the life. Is it really the life of Christ, or of somebody else, and a mere *auto*-biography?

“Many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Self may bear a certain resemblance to Christ, and yet have a life altogether different from his. “And this is the spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” “But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever;” the same now, in the believer, as in the boy of Nazareth and the man of Galilee. His life is always consistent with itself; and, though reproduced millions of times under infinitely varying circumstances, it never loses a single essential feature.

How, then, shall it be secured, without omissions or interpolations, as the real life of Christ?

The process which Paul describes in his own case is the only infallible process known. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” This is the plain statement of a matter of fact, concerning which it was clearly impossible for such a man to make any mistake. Besides, it was amply verified by all the details of his personal history.

But it was as a Christian, and not by virtue of his apostolic office, that Paul was able to

make this declaration; it would have been all the same had he, by divine appointment, remained only a tent-maker. So he taught, as an apostle, all who were not apostles, referring ever to the common experience as a well-known fact, and as being absolutely essential to Christian character. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

The first step in the process of receiving the life of Christ is a crucifixion, or death; and this is in no respect figurative or mystical, but, quite to the contrary, plain and real, most desirable and necessary. Every man has at some time been conscious of a double self, or of a part of himself which is distinctly evil, and which may properly be called "the old man," "the body of sin." In every case *this* self eminently deserves the fate of the malefactors who were crucified with Christ; it needs to be destroyed, to be utterly dead and buried.

Then, after this death of the old man, comes the resurrection of the new man. Saul, the persecutor, becomes Paul, the Christian. The wrong and false self dies, and gives place to Christ; while the true and right self receives, with

Christ, the fullness of life. "I am crucified—nevertheless I live." I live—not I who am crucified, but I in whom Christ lives.

A happy and glorious change is this, involving no loss of the proper selfhood, but, rather, an infinite gain. The double self of the old regimen is dissolved, and a new alliance is formed, with Christ as undisputed head. For the base and treacherous partner—once so controlling in the composite selfhood, but now retired by death—Christ himself is substituted, and is invested with supreme and rightful control. It is the death of what was only evil, making way for the engrafted life which is of God and heaven, the true and the eternal. With this change comes a wonderful release, new liberty and power and happiness. It must be the very state for which man was created, so well does it harmonize with his constitution and meet all the demands of his being. Now, through Christ dwelling in the soul, God and man are joined together in joyful fellowship; and this to the creature must be an infinite boon. It is paradise restored, the heart itself a very Eden, the divine life perpetually manifest in the flesh.

This internal transformation, by death for life, is the beginning of the consummation of the wondrous scheme of God's love for man's

redemption. The only-begotten Son came into the world, that he might come into the world's heart. He died upon the cross, that all sin might be crucified with him. He arose from the dead, that he might raise all souls from spiritual death, and all bodies from the slumbers of the grave, to be reunited in a glorious immortality. And now he lives to die no more, that he may be the present and everlasting life of all who receive him into themselves. To such as thus receive him are fulfilled the wonderful words of his prayer to the Father: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; . . . I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

So this is the conclusive evidence of Christ's coming into the world; and surely it is the crowning glory of humanity, to be in union with God by the indwelling Christ,—a glory for which we may well surrender in crucifixion the life of the rebellious and sordid self.

But does all this seem to be vague, mystical, and unreal? So it is, and so it ever must be, when expressed only in words. For this very reason words need to be translated into facts. The historic Gospels must be issued in living copies, and take their place among the substantial

realities of the day—the highest of them all. The life of Christ must appear as an actual life in man, according to the provision made for every age and generation, for every country and neighborhood and household and person. Then, while it is still mysterious like all other life, it has the power of self-attestation like any other present fact.

Nothing is more real than the crucifixion of self, when it is actually proceeding or completed. Nothing can be better known than the substitution of the Christly for the selfish, when it is once fully accomplished. Nothing can be more practical; for it changes the very springs of all action, furnishing motives of transcendent power. Nothing can be more practicable; for God himself seeks it by all the agencies of his grace, awaiting only our consent and co-operation. Nothing can produce such grand and glorious results; for it determines both character and destiny, securing the highest interests of time and eternity. In short, nothing else ever put in words, or dimly idealized by the mind, needs so much to become a well-defined and palpable fact in every human being, as *the real life of Christ*.

XIII.

TESTS OF THE LIFE.

IS it possible for Christ really to live in man? Perhaps the answer brought forward in the last chapter may be regarded as sufficient; but a far better answer is the fact itself. Nothing has such power of producing conviction as a present fact; and this, where it is once recognized, sets the question of possibility forever at rest.

But such a fact as this life of Christ can not remain unrecognized. Whether it can be comprehended or not, it is so clearly attested to personal consciousness, and manifested to general observation, that it may be critically collated with the character revealed in the Gospels, and its correspondence or identity accurately determined. If the Christian himself—Christian because Christ is in him—neglects such verification, the world around him is not slow to institute the comparison, and to pass judgment accordingly. Paul's statement, "Christ liveth in me," was never called in question by those who knew his manner of life; nor can it be, in any other

case, where it is the real fact. Here, as in every thing else, "seeing is believing;" and therefore the main objective point is to insure the fact.

But if the life of Christ can be actually reproduced in man only according to the apostolic formula heretofore considered—that is, by the process of crucifixion and substitution—that process needs to be very closely watched. Having been commenced, of course it should be completed and maintained in its completeness. From beginning to end it should be so conducted as to avoid all possible mistakes and failures. When the biography of Christ is about to be published in mere words, the simple process of the types requires diligent attention and skill, frequent proofs, revisions, and corrections. So, when it takes the higher form of actual life in human editions, the more elaborate and difficult process can not be successful without the utmost care. It needs to be thoroughly tested at every point, in the natural and necessary order declared by the apostle: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

As the whole matter is strictly personal, so let the question be brought directly home. Has

“the old man” been effectually crucified, or only suspended from the cross? Is “the body of sin” destroyed, or simply disabled?

The malefactors who were crucified with Christ survived him, nor did they die until their legs were broken. How long the evil self may continue to live in a state of partial crucifixion, obviously can not be decided under physical law. It seems in many cases to have remarkable power of endurance, or else the torture of the cross is in some way greatly alleviated. Long after the nails may be supposed to have been driven, signs of the old life appear, and perhaps the thief responds to the taunt, “Save thyself, and come down from the cross!”

Here is evidently the critical point,—the possibility and danger of arresting the work. An attempted crucifixion is not enough; it must go forward to its proper consummation. To be really crucified with Christ is also to die with him, and with him to be buried. The destruction of sin is to be as complete and effectual as the death of the Redeemer from sin. Any failure at this stage of the process is transferred in effect to all the rest, and makes the whole imperfect. The death of sin precedes and prepares the way for the life of righteousness. “Therefore we are buried with him, . . . that like as

Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." "For in that he died he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Of course, this reckoning is not to be conjectural, but according to the accomplished fact; and the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection are to be consecutive and real events, in order to be followed by the fullness of life.

Whether the process has actually taken place, or how far and thoroughly it has been carried on, must be ascertained from the evidence furnished by the facts; and, as in other cases, the evidence may be drawn out by suitable questions—questions simple enough to be answered by a child. Let a few of them be taken as tests, applicable under all circumstances.

Is it your supreme desire to please God? It was Christ's, undoubtedly, and will be yours if he lives in you. Supposing the desire to exist, is it really supreme? Then it overrules all other

desires, and is practically sufficient in resisting temptations, overcoming evil, bearing burdens, and performing all work.

Have you a hearty relish for the means of grace, and a genuine, habitual delight in all that proceeds from God? It must be so if Jesus Christ is in you, for nothing was more prominent in his personal history.

Are you conscious of a deep-seated repugnance to sin, an instinctive shrinking from every thing wrong or of doubtful character? And is sin so abhorrent to you by its very nature, and not merely because of its penalties? Such sensitiveness is an essential element of the true life.

Have you a strong and unflagging personal interest in the work of the Gospel, the salvation of men, the extension and establishment of the kingdom of God? Christ certainly never loses interest in his own work; and what he came from heaven and died upon the cross to accomplish is most assuredly the predominant aim of his life in you.

And, with all the rest, have you conscious communion and intercourse with him, as with an intimate personal friend? If he is really in you, he is nearer than any human being can be, and fully commands your love and confidence,

which he as fully reciprocates. The fact is in perfect accord with the promise, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

In a matter of so much importance, obscurity and doubt should not be allowed the least toleration; and, to make assurance doubly sure, the utmost impartiality and faithfulness should be exercised in applying these and all other tests of the life.

XIV.

ARRESTED GROWTH.

WHAT is growth? It always signifies *increase* in some respect, in quantity or quality, in size, number, strength, or something else properly belonging to its subject. It is of two kinds—mechanical and vital. With the former, the increase is from without, by an external accretion of parts, as when a building is said to grow. With the latter, the increase is evolved from within, by a process which constitutes one of the wonderful phenomena of that mysterious thing called life. Thus, all vegetables and animals grow from the seed, or germ, “by the gradual assimilation of new matter into the living organism.” This is the more strict and ordinary acceptation of the term, true growth always implying the presence of life.

But life is not limited to matter, however fearfully and wonderfully organized. Its highest form, in the creature, belongs to mind made in the image of the Creator. Whether this life be

merely intellectual, and thus imperfect, or both intellectual and moral, as in the fullness of spiritual life, it is appropriately manifested by growth.

Here the increase is just as real, of its kind, as in any physical organization; but it has this most important difference, that it is not restricted to any definite limits. All material bodies endowed with life have their natural periods of growth, maturity, and decay; but the soul which is alive unto God need never be arrested in its career of development. Its growth, like its life, may be eternal.

There are certain liabilities, however, which are not to be overlooked, and concerning which the analogies of other living forms are both striking and instructive. In all cases alike, the vital process of growth is exposed to the danger of interruption.

Vegetation is often checked, and sometimes destroyed, by a sudden change of temperature from heat to cold, by extreme drought, flooding rains, and numerous other agencies. Plants which thrive in the tropics would perish farther north; and even those which endure the rigors of Arctic regions attain only a stunted growth. In our Lord's Parable of the Sower, the seed which fell into stony places sprang up, but soon withered away, because "it had no deepness of

earth;" while that which fell among thorns was choked, and "brought no fruit to perfection."

If such a fate were not generally averted by the arts of the husbandman, and especially by the merciful arrangements of Providence, it is very certain that the earth would soon cease to be a fit habitation for human beings. The untimely arrest of all vegetable growth, which is only a supposable contingency, would be the failure of the harvest, and the famine of the world. Surely, the most remote liability to so terrible a disaster is quite enough to contemplate.

Dwarfs are occasionally found among animals also. From some cause or other, their natural development has been arrested prematurely; they cease to grow, not by virtue of constitutional limitation, but through some interference with the vital process, some violation of organic law. Perhaps in early years toil has been excessive, and nutriment insufficient; or disease may have retarded the due performance of necessary functions. If such specimens are comparatively rare and exceptional, it is probably for the reason that the causes of arrested growth are, in most cases, sufficient to destroy life, and thus relieve the world of the painful spectacle.

But, unhappily, dead or dwarfed souls everywhere abound; for their calamity does not effect

their extinction; they still exist in living bodies. Physical laws are often wantonly violated, but are much better observed, on the whole, than the higher laws of the realm of mind. If the disregard of the latter were confined to the reasoning faculties, or to any other exercise of mere intellect, it would not be so disastrous and deplorable; but it is carried into the whole moral nature, and sunders all vital spiritual relations with God, the only Fountain of Life.

Such is the actual state of multitudes, who are declared by the Scriptures to be “dead in trespasses and sins.” They are destitute of true spiritual life, except in its dormant and unproductive germs, and are therefore incapable of true spiritual growth until quickened by power from on high—a power which they may receive by voluntarily coming to the Light.

Even those who have been thus quickened may, and often do, so neglect the conditions of their new life as either to sink again into spiritual death, or else to continue in the abnormal state of perpetual infancy. Although weak as babes at the first, they are capable of unlimited growth by the use of means which are fully at their disposal; but, failing in this, they remain without strength or usefulness as Christians, and if they live at all it is only as spiritual dwarfs.

Such were many of the early converts to Christianity. In the case of those who had been brought from the ignorance and corruptions of paganism, the evil admitted of some palliation; but it always occasioned the deepest solicitude on the part of the apostles, who labored diligently for its correction, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that they might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." But even the Hebrew Christians were open to censure, not that they had made compromises with heathen customs, but had failed of proper spiritual growth. "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat; for every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe."

The very constitution of the Church had one chief object for its members, that they "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; and that they be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine." The accomplishment of this object was a matter of such great importance that it

received the special and unremitting attention of the apostles. The liabilities to failure were guarded against by all possible means, and failure itself was deprecated as a most serious calamity.

Now, the infancy of the Church has passed away, and given place to a growth of vast proportions. But is this true also of the average Christian life? As compared with the whole number of the Church, how many have reached a strong and symmetrical Christian manhood, and become thoroughly competent as Christian teachers in the family, the Sunday-school, and elsewhere? What is the proportion of those who are even aiming at such a development, and steadily advancing toward it?

If we are not of the number, we may be sure that it is by our own fault. There is somewhere a neglect or wrong, which, with suitable effort, we may ascertain and correct. Nothing is more certain than that spiritual dwarfs are voluntarily self-constituted. So complete and available are all the provisions which God has made for the Christian life, that we may effectually resist the causes and escape the evils of arrested growth.

XV.

FOOD AND GROWTH.

IN every perfect grain of wheat is inclosed a minute and delicate germ, which is thus protected from injury, and preserved for the use of the sower. This germ is endowed with vitality, and may be said to contain *potentially* the roots, the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, of the future harvest. Like faith, it "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

But in order to attain its possibilities, and fulfill the promise of the harvest, the germ must grow; and in order to grow it demands certain well-known conditions. Its latent life must first be stimulated into activity by warmth, and then duly supplied with food. These conditions are met when it falls into good ground, warmed by sunshine and watered by rain from heaven. Then as the germ, quickened by the heat of the sun, makes its first call for food, the substance of the enveloping grain is decomposed by moisture, and affords the first and necessary supply.

By the nutriment thus obtained—near at hand and in suitable form—the germ, which has now become the plant, begins to grow, not upward, but downward, deeper into the ground. The first thing in its growth is to provide for a fullness of growth by insuring an abundance of food, the initial supply from the dissolving kernel being soon exhausted. So the roots are developed and sent out as feeders, to draw support from the fertile soil. Afterward, when the upward growth begins, and through its whole course, these organs of supply continue their growth and activity beneath the surface, and are aided by the co-operation of the leaves, as corresponding organs in the air above.

Thus, at every point, food and growth are coincident. The supply of the one and the continuance of the other are mutually necessary, are carried on together, and are specially provided for in the organization of the plant.

In the more complex constitution of animals, especially those of the highest type, similar provisions are found. Life, at first, seems to consist principally in feeding and growing. Food, as the chief requisite from first to last, is provided and made available in a form and manner suited to each successive stage of growth. The simple diet of infancy serves its purpose, and

then gives place to the more ample and varied diet of youth and maturity; and, as the demand for food increases, so also does the ability to procure and use it.

The organs which directly or indirectly minister to growth by nutrition hold by far the most important place in the body. These are the hidden and "uncomely parts" mentioned by the apostle, upon which "we bestow more abundant honor," because they are the vital, and thus the more necessary, parts. While other members, like the eyes, the hands, and the feet, are simply useful, the stomach and all the organs of nutrition are absolutely indispensable. They come into action at the very beginning of life, and continue their functions to its close. As the special agents of sustenance to the whole body, they grow with its growth and strengthen with its strength. When they have secured fullness of stature, they still serve the purpose of repairing the natural waste of the system, and maintain the necessary vigor, unabated, through many years.

Cut off the regular supply of suitable food, or let the organs of digestion and assimilation remain undeveloped, or become in any way impaired so as not to perform their office, and the results may be readily anticipated; all growth

is at once arrested, and life itself soon comes to an end.

Is not all this equally true of the human mind—true in a far higher and more important sense than of vegetables and animals?

Mind differs essentially from matter, from the most perfect organizations of matter, but it is subject to similar laws of growth. At the beginning it shares the state of the body, and seems to be even more feeble, for its very existence can scarcely be recognized. All its faculties are mere germs, which inclose infinite possibilities indeed, but require favorable conditions for their development.

What is the exact process of quickening, nutrition, and growth, in its earliest stages, no one can tell, for no one can remember; and whether at first it more closely resembles that of the vegetable or of the animal it is difficult to say, but the results appear in due time. To some extent, the requisite conditions are ordinarily furnished in the genial influences of the well-ordered home. If, however, the early influences are unfavorable, more or less of the capacities of the soul will remain dormant, or attain at the best only a stunted growth.

In every case food adapted to the mind is indispensable; and this food is useful knowledge

in all its varieties. To the infant mind it must be brought and presented in its simplest elements, and in such a manner as to be eagerly received, comprehended, and retained. It may be only as milk, but it gradually imparts the ability and creates the demand for a stronger diet.

In course of time the several senses, as so many feeders, or avenues of knowledge to the mind, acquire a range and power adequate to an abundant supply of food, and the more they receive the more competent they become. Curiosity, or mental appetite, grows by that upon which it feeds; and when properly developed it affords a constant stimulus to effort.

But the most important of all in the constitution of mind is the faculty, or group of faculties, by which knowledge is held, analyzed, digested, and appropriated to the mental growth. Imagination, memory, comparison, judgment, are immediately concerned in the vital process, and should be able to carry it on with promptness and efficiency. To train them in such exercise of their functions is one great object of education; and this is accomplished, in part at least, by supplying them with a large variety of rich and nutritious mental aliment. Thus they increase in power, like the vital organs of plants and animals, and become able to minister con-

stantly to the general development and vigor of the mind.

But there is a still higher life, in which our lesson has its chief and special significance.

The soul never finds its true place, or enters upon a course of entirely right and symmetrical development, until it is quickened by divine power and is endowed with divine life. At the beginning of this life there is the same feebleness which we have discovered elsewhere, and the same need of serving a simple and nutritious food, even if it be merely to sustain a present life. But this is only the initial stage, and is not by any means to be accepted as a permanent state. The newly quickened or imparted spiritual faculties, in their early weakness, conform to the general analogy; and now the great problem to be wrought out is their speedy, healthful, and vigorous growth.

One most important factor in this problem, as every body can see, is food adapted to the actual stage of growth. So the Apostle Peter exhorts all who occupy the state of infancy: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Paul says, "Every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe." Of

those to whom he wrote, some seem to have relapsed into this state, or one resembling it: "For ye are *become* such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." For this reason he reproved them, and yet taught them again "the first principles of the oracles of God." There were many things which they could not receive, and he could not teach to them, because "strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age." The twelve disciples of our Lord failed at first to comprehend no small part of his teachings which afterward became their richest food.

So it is, without doubt, in the experience of all true Christians. They are able to mark distinctly the difference in this respect between one point and another in their progress; indeed, their growth is indicated by a growing relish for the truth as it is in Jesus, and an increasing power of spiritual discernment. The simplest elements of the Word, when received "with all readiness of mind," so strengthen and enlarge the mental and spiritual capacity that other truths can be received, which in their turn educe a growth demanding yet larger supplies; and thus the process may be continued through an endless series of feeding and growing.

XVI.

WORK AND GROWTH.

THE lilies of the field “toil not, neither do they spin;” but they work, nevertheless. From the period of germination until their destiny is fulfilled they are in constant activity, taking up nutriment from the soil and drinking in the moisture and sunshine of heaven. It is true, they act only upon the materials brought within their range, and their activity may be retarded or accelerated by influences of the weather, over which they have no control; but still it is activity none the less from being under prescribed limitations. They work, not passively, as a bucket is filled at the spring, not by simply receiving what is forced upon them, but by the orderly operation of an inherent vital power. They select, receive, and use whatever they need and can obtain; they work by the motions of an inscrutable life; and the one purpose of all this work is consummated growth.

The birds of the air “sow not, neither do they gather into barns;” but they do the work

assigned them under divine supervision and care, making the most diligent use of all their powers. To obtain their necessary food, they have the range of the whole storehouse of nature, of air, land, and water. They begin their search at the break of day, continue it with brief intervals for the service of song, and rest only under cover of darkness. If provisions fall short in the place of their habitation, they pass on rapid wing to other climes, there to go through the same round of happy activity. To supply the wants of the young while in their callow state, the parent birds are required to put forth extraordinary exertions; but soon the fledgelings become able to shift for themselves, and in due time return the service to broods of their own. Their work is doubtless graduated to their ability; but it is also enforced by necessity, prompted by instinct, and made to contribute to the promotion of their growth and the accomplishment of their destiny.

So it is with every living thing throughout creation, in the realms both of matter and of mind. Action every-where seems to be a natural and necessary expression of life, the spontaneous putting forth of vital force. It has the narrowest limits in the lowest forms of life, as in the lilies, but takes a wider scope at each successive

step in the rising scale, until it reaches the greatest breadth in man, who has the highest endowments of life and the largest capabilities of action.

In the first instance, that of the lilies, the operation of vital force, or of what we have called work, is confined to the process of nutrition; it seems to be the effort of life to secure support and growth by suitable food. This primary purpose of work becomes greatly extended, but is never lost, in the highest forms of life. Man must exert his physical, mental, and moral powers in supplying the necessary food for his physical, mental, and moral growth, and then use that growth for purposes reaching beyond himself. In short, he must work for a living, that he may work for something more than a living.

Now we come to the kind of work which is most valuable in promoting growth. It is work without anxiety and distrust, like that of the lilies and the birds. It is work with the love of work, the spontaneous outgushing of exuberant life, the bursting forth of an irrepressible vital force.

Such work is happily illustrated in the case of the healthy, growing child. How full of life and activity! A strong man, attempting to go

through with the same motions for a day, would find it equivalent to his severest labor. Why? Because it would be unnatural and constrained. Put the same child to enforced labor, as a task or a penalty; take away the joyousness, spontaneity, and freedom of action,—and at once the case is entirely changed.

But can the man do his own proper work as the child plays? Why not? The child's play is the child's work. Why may not the man's work be only the free and happy play of all his powers? Is not this the lesson our Savior drew from the lilies and the birds? We have a Provider too, a Father who is more to us than to the flowers of the field—more than any human parent can be to the child. When this is heartily believed, it puts us immediately into right relations to our life work, and makes us children again in the happy outflow of all our activities.

The fact is, working *merely for a living* is the poorest possible way of getting a living, or of doing any thing besides. "The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment." God gives us life, physical, mental, and moral; assures us of his faithful superintendence and care over the whole; and then, in infinite wisdom, appoints to every one of us his work. That work can be properly

done only with the faith and love of little children, as the free expression of the life that is in us; in which case it infallibly promotes growth, and secures the objects of growth.

Let these conditions be observed in our spiritual life as Christians, and we have the secret of all true progress and real usefulness.

Does God provide for the lilies and care for the birds? And has he still greater interest in the higher physical life of human beings, so that, in case we do our simple duty, we may feel absolutely confident of unfailing supplies? How much more, then, in that highest life, by which we are brought into intelligent and conscious fellowship with himself? Surely for this life, above every other, he has constant care, effective superintendence, and all the marvelous riches of his love and grace. Thus he leaves us as free as the child to the spontaneous expression of our life in Christian work.

The first thing, of course, is feeding, with the sharpened appetite of abundant vitality and healthful exercise. And what food is set before us! Who can tell the rich variety and ample store of spiritual viands—the “water springing up into everlasting life;” “the sincere milk of the Word;” the divine testimonies, “sweeter than honey and the honey-comb;” “the living

bread which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world;" even more than angels' food, "for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Again and again may we return to the feast; for there "are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these we might be *partakers of the divine nature*." What has the child of God to do but to take his daily bread, and then go forth as a child to work?

To receive such food, we say, is the *primary* demand and condition of growth; but it is not the only demand. Exercise comes between food and growth. So a large field of activity is opened before the Christian, where his hearty and joyful work invariably renews appetite, invigorates digestion, and fixes the nourishment already received as so much consolidated growth; while at the same time it serves the additional purpose of usefulness to others.

Let him entirely withdraw from the field, or occupy it in any other spirit, and he violates the fundamental conditions of healthy growth. If he eats without working, or receives without using, he becomes sickly and feeble, like the pampered child or the gluttonous man. If he goes to the performance of duty as an exacted drudgery, his work is without the animation of

life, and brings only weariness and exhaustion. If he devotes attention chiefly to his own spiritual life, anxiously watching every process and marking every symptom, as though that life depended solely upon himself, and might perchance be lost if he were to forget it for a moment, then it is certain he will have very little else to do, very little growth to mark, very little life to lose.

Let it not be forgotten, then, that spiritual life is God's gift, and his special care; that it has an object beyond itself, which it clearly indicates by its promptings to useful activity; and that in such activity we have the safe and happy solution of all questions concerning the proper relations of food, work, and growth.

XVII.

WARMTH AND GROWTH.

A GRAIN of wheat deposited in the folds of a mummy, and laid away in an Egyptian tomb for thousands of years, still remains a grain of wheat—having a kind of latent life, but no growth. Take it and bury it deep in the cold ground, and it perishes; or cover it near the surface, where the Autumn sunshine falls and the heats of Summer linger, and immediately it germinates, sending the roots downward and the blade upward, until its growth is arrested by the cold of Winter. With the first warm breath of Spring it renews the work, and is carried rapidly forward, under the increasing heat, to the full corn in the ear, producing thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold.

The lilies of the field exceed in their apparel all the glory of Solomon, only because they have been fostered by warmth and clothed with the splendor of the sun.

If the birds of the air follow in their journeys the course of the seasons, it is always in the

line of approaching and receding heat. During the genial months they gather food and rear their young, and then depart to perfect their growth in sunnier climes.

When the beasts and creeping things of the earth have retired to Winter-quarters they cease to grow, and scarcely live, until they are revived and called forth from their seclusion by the warmth of the returning sun.

Upon man himself the effect of extreme cold is to benumb, stupefy, and repress all the functions of life. The only antidote, among the Esquimaux and other stunted inhabitants of the frigid zones, is found in the protection of furs and the abundant use of heat-producing food. The opposite effects of heat and cold upon human life are less observable in our temperate climate, simply because the extremes are not so great, and the arts of civilization create perpetual Summer in our homes; but even here, in order to comfort and growth, some substitute must be found for the diminishing heat of the sun.

Thus, through the whole range of physical life, Summer is the *natural* period of growth, and Winter, of rest; and the only exceptions arise from special provisions of organization, or artificial modifications of temperature.

Animals are less than vegetables subject to

change with the seasons, because they are constituted with special provisions against such change. Especially is this true of the more highly organized, and of man more than others. His life is of such an order as to require the utmost possible independence of the unfavorable conditions of climate and weather. So, while his mind is endowed with ability to command the aid of art in maintaining his defense against cold, his body is furnished with the most perfect heat-producing apparatus.

The oxygen of the atmosphere, which supports combustion in our furnaces and grates, renders the same service in our lungs. Here food takes the place of fuel. After undergoing digestion in the stomach, it imparts to the blood certain qualities, from which, by the access of air in the lungs, heat is generated; which then is distributed by circulation through the arteries to the whole body. This heat has a higher rate than that of Summer—ninety-eight degrees Fahrenheit—and is maintained with little or no variation throughout the year. It is so abundant, with sufficient food and exercise, as to be able for a time to resist the most intense cold; and it keeps the body warm and glowing where a piece of detached flesh would be speedily frozen. As the walls of our dwellings inclose,

retain, and economize the heat produced within; so our clothing serves the same purpose for animal heat, preventing its dissipation from the surface, and equalizing the rate in every part of the body.

With such defenses against cold, and such means of generating and conserving heat, man is in himself a kind of organized Summer, a physical condensation of the tropics, where every organ is supplied with the conditions of a luxuriant growth.

But all this heat of our dwellings and our bodies is not, in strictness of speech, produced, but derived. It was drawn originally from the sunshine, by the growth of those things which ultimately become fuel and food. It has been mysteriously "locked up," and carefully preserved in wood and coal, in fruit and grain, or else transferred to the growth of animals whose flesh becomes food; and so it remains until liberated by the rapid combustion of the furnace, or the slower process of the lungs. Our food has nutritive properties which minister to growth, but they are no more necessary than the heat-imparting qualities which it receives as heat in its own growth. Thus the sun, as the primary source of heat, shares directly or indirectly with the earth and air in the support of all physical

life and growth—directly by its own rays, indirectly by fuel and food.

A full explanation of the actual and necessary connection between warmth and growth may be impossible; but it is certainly a most significant fact that heat is essentially nothing more nor less than *physical force*. It is not matter, but that which communicates motion to matter. It is not life, but it becomes the auxiliary of life. In one form it is heat; in another, growth; in a third, motion; and in every form it is either actual or possible power. The same agent, or secondary cause, which breaks the slumbers of Winter, evokes the life of Spring, sustains the growth of Summer, and matures the fruit of Autumn, appears only in another form when it lifts up the clouds and careers in the storm, or when it submits to be harnessed to machinery, and furnishes motion to drive our workshops, locomotives, and steamships. In every case it is the agent of God, the medium of his operation, "the hiding of his power;" and the heat necessary to physical development is only his chosen way of communicating a needed force.

Are not all these facts suggestive of yet higher and grander truths?

Life is found in connection with matter; but it is not matter, for matter may be without life.

Life is found in connection with mind; but it is not mind, for even mind may be without its proper life. Physical life is not spiritual life—the latter being of a far higher order; but both alike are of the operation of God. In the one case that operation accords with the nature of matter; in the other, with the entirely distinct and pre-eminent nature of mind; but, as the operation of God in both cases, it presents striking coincidences in respect to the several conditions of life and growth. The analogy includes not only food and work, which we have considered heretofore, but also warmth—in respect to which it is no less complete and instructive.

Men may bury the germs of moral life in the folds of a dead faith, or cover them up to perish in the depths of worldliness, and never reap the ripened harvest. They may seek the hiding-places of slumbering indifference, or surround themselves with a moral atmosphere like an Arctic night, and so barely survive or miserably perish. Or they may become so dependent upon external influences as to suffer the discomfort of chills or the arrest of growth and activity by every unfavorable change of moral climate. But all these things are of their own choosing.

Provisions for securing vital warmth for the soul are even more perfect and available than

for the body; for they depend, not upon seasons and latitudes, but solely upon individual acceptance. In the darkest night or the bleakest Winter of moral surroundings, they may be had in abundance by every trusting soul.

God's love is infinite in measure, and is communicated without conditions of time or place: and *this love is spiritual heat*, in the broadest extent of the analogy. It is revealed from heaven only through Jesus Christ as "*the Sun of righteousness*," in whose rays are combined both the light of knowledge and the warmth of love. It is also conserved in the written Word, and is thus received indirectly as the heat-imparting quality of the soul's daily food.

Proceeding from Christ, who is still as really present in our world as is the sun which shines in the cloudless sky; taken up from the stores of the Word, which is the life-giving bread; and imparted by the agency of the Holy Spirit, whose influence is as pervading as the vital air—*this love* is the power of God in man for all the functions of spiritual life, as force in work and as warmth in growth.

XVIII.

CULTURE AND GROWTH.

“AND the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.” Was the man put there simply to look upon the beauty and eat the food? “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden *to dress it and to keep it.*”

But why this dressing and keeping? The garden was already planted, and growing. Besides, in that happy dawn of horticulture under divine auspices, there were no troublesome thorns and thistles to dispute possession of the soil. These came afterward, when the ground was cursed, and were found only outside of Eden. So the plants of the garden seem to have been supplied with the chief conditions of a beautiful and useful growth. They had abundant food, vital activity, and invigorating warmth. What more could they require? Simply, *culture.*

Mere growth, however luxuriant, was not enough. For the best results they needed in their growth—as did the man himself—wise and kindly oversight, direction and discipline.

If culture was necessary to such plants then and there, how much more after the change of situation, and now, when thorns and thistles have multiplied for many centuries and quite preoccupied the soil? In this greater necessity, imposing additional toil, consists the very burden of the primal curse. To produce bread, culture now must begin back beyond the planting, by breaking up the ground and removing its natural preoccupants; and so it must continue, with more or less of difficulty, until the gathering of the harvest home.

When “a sower went forth to sow,” his success was not a question of chance, but of previous labor. The seed was all the same, and the process of sowing was the same; but the results were in four distinct parts, according to the preparation bestowed upon the ground. In the first, the surface had not been broken at all; in the second, the subsoil had not been reached; in the third, briars and thorns were still in possession; and only in the fourth were found the well-arranged preliminaries of a healthful growth.

But the culture which precedes growth must

also attend it. Beginning with the soil, it must go forward with the growth of the plants, and be adapted to their diversified wants.

The difference in beauty and fruitfulness between the common glebe of nature and our well-kept fields and gardens is only a difference of tillage, answering the question, what shall grow, and how it shall grow? Under the hand of skillful training, the flowers put on new beauties of form and color; the various fruits acquire a finer flavor and a larger growth; the cereals, which scarcely had a place before, are produced in rich abundance and variety; and the common earth gives intimation of another Eden yet to be. In every case the excellence of growth, if not the growth itself, depends upon the fact and quality of culture.

The culture by which such results are wrought is a part of the dominion which has been granted to man over subordinate life. It is a kind of inferior human providence, serving the functions of life, rather than performing them. It is not a condition of growth, like food, vital action, and warmth; but it consists in the intelligent management of all these conditions, so as to secure the best growth.

Such administrative aid is of the greatest necessity to plants, because they have the narrowest

range of power. The grain of wheat must grow where it falls, if it grow at all; and, though it may struggle to succeed, it can not supply the lack of favorable conditions. Here comes in the aid of man, with the service of culture, making all requisite provisions for a fruitful growth, and to a great extent controlling the issue. Animals also, though endowed with greater power of self-help, derive similar advantages from the intelligent direction of their propagation and growth; and by skillful management, in course of time some of them attain a degree of perfection, a combination of superior qualities, known as "thorough-bred."

But, in the case of both plants and animals, it is only the wisely regulated use of means divinely provided which constitutes culture. The power to do this belongs to man by virtue of his superior intelligence; and the exercise of such power obviously fulfills the divine intention, affords variety to human employments, and meets certain demands of growth in all inferior life.

But a much higher field of culture, and even a better garden than Eden, is found in man himself. So much greater also are the obligations, necessities, and benefits of cultivation; and these increase with each successive grade in

the ascending series of departments—the physical, mental, and moral.

Here, in fact, is the only garden now remaining, which “the Lord God planted eastward in Eden,” and into which he has put every human being “to dress it and to keep it.” Like the earth, it has indeed been blighted by the curse, preoccupied and overrun by an evil growth; but it may be renewed by the more abundant blessing, and become the place where may be “heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day.” Here, then, is the scene of paradise restored, and the sphere of man’s highest work; and to this work earth and heaven are tributary, with the very richest provisions of the wisdom and love of God.

The proper culture of the body begins with infancy, and is carried on through life. It regulates food, work, and warmth, so as to secure growth, not only in size, but in symmetry, strength, skill, and whatever else may be necessary to physical perfection and efficiency. Having in view the various purposes which the body is required to serve as the instrument of the soul, it seeks to bring every organ into the best possible condition for such service. It guards against intemperance, indolence, and all evil habits, and thus avoids weakness, disease, and deformity.

During infancy this culture is, of course, simply *received* through the intelligent care of parents; but it soon becomes the personal work of the growing child, and must be learned as one of the great arts of life. From first to last it consists in dressing and keeping the body, not in the sense of the fashion-plate, but according to the laws and provisions of God; and without it there is no really serviceable growth. It is easy to see that, if an infant were suddenly to attain the stature of an adult, in all but stature it would be an infant still. If it be supposed to have strength as well as size, even then it would be unable to walk, or talk, or do any thing ordinarily acquired by culture, and at the best would be only a monster babe. It is for the very purpose of needed preparation for the duties of maturity that opportunity of culture is afforded by the long period of natural growth—this culture beginning with growth, and growth taking the direction and variety of culture.

The necessary culture of the soul, though taking an infinitely higher rank, is strikingly analogous in both its purpose and its process.

Beginning with the dawn of intelligence, it becomes the great work of probation, with special reference to our usefulness in the present life, and our well-being in the future state. It

comprehends all the faculties, intellectual and moral, actual and possible; and of course it presupposes the divine endowment of spiritual life, without which intellectual development is only mental distortion. The required growth is in all useful knowledge and strength, but especially in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the one great and perfect model of the family of human souls. To be like him is the aim of all true mental and spiritual culture.

For the complete success of this work nothing is wanting. The planting and the increase, with the necessary food and exercise and warmth, may be secured with even greater certainty than in any inferior culture; while explicit directions are given in the Word, and ample opportunities are furnished in the ordinary discipline of life. But it remains for us to use the means provided, and, by special care, vigilance, and faithfulness, to secure for the soul the joint benefits of culture and growth.

XIX.

GROWTH AND FRUIT.

THE blade and the ear are of little use without the full corn in the ear. The sower going forth to sow always expects an increase in kind—sometimes thirty, sixty, or an hundred-fold; and this is his recompense. The soil may be fertile, the plants vigorous, the season favorable, the culture sufficient, and the growth luxuriant; but they have all been in vain unless bread comes with the harvest.

“A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.” When he had done this for three years in succession, finding no fruit whatever, was it strange that he said to the dresser of his vineyard, “Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” The only plea for sparing the tree yet another year was founded on the hope that, with more nutriment and further culture it would bear fruit. “And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”

Such is the universal verdict in the case.

Cultivated growth, whatever may be said of other kinds, must produce some adequate result, or in due time be abandoned and destroyed. So also the growth which is natural and spontaneous must support its claim to place by the value of its fruit; otherwise it deserves to be cut down or uprooted, like the briars and thorns.

The lesson so generally recognized in ordinary business is carried by the Great Teacher into the highest forms of culture and growth. When he speaks of himself as the true vine and his Father as the husbandman, he adds, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth [or pruneth] that it may bring forth more fruit." The branch must have growth, but only as a means to an end. Indeed, the required growth is not so much of the branch itself as of the fruit; and, lest the former should appropriate what belongs to the latter, the gardener resorts to the process of pruning.

From first to last, every provision of both divine and human agency has in view only such growth as is productive. Rich and abundant fruit is the ultimate purpose, the legitimate expectation, and the decisive test. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

“Nothing but leaves” was found upon a certain fig-tree, when our Lord came to it in his hunger, on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem. He “found nothing” thereon but leaves only”—not even growing figs nor buds of fruit; and so he pronounced the sentence under which it withered away and dried up from the roots.

This barren fig-tree stands in the matchless object-lessons of the Master, as an admonitory example of uncompleted growth. Leaves are not merely ornamental, but are an essential part of the tree. They are the *praying* organs, if we may call them so, which seek and receive from the all-comprising air the very elements of life and growth. But what is thus received should appear again in fruit; otherwise the growth is only in parts, and without its proper consummation. The tree was designed to subserve an end beyond itself, and never fulfilled that design, nor gave the slightest promise of fulfillment. It was fair to look upon, and attracted attention from a distance; but it yielded no service, and therefore was condemned.

Did the disciples ever again think of that tree and its lesson? Could they fail afterward to see in it something more than proof of miraculous power? Who can tell what influence it may have had as a lesson of service through all

their subsequent lives? As Christian men they were certainly conspicuous, not merely by the fair aspect of Christian character, but by the most abundant and useful labors. They not only maintained a vigorous spiritual life and growth, but were able to render to their Lord the ripened results in words and works; which still enrich the world. By some means they had made the grand discovery that they were not to live for themselves in spiritual luxury, but to "spend and be spent" for others, in actual toil, sacrifice, and suffering, even unto death. Thus were they fruitful in the products of an efficient and stalwart Christian manhood.

Is there a greater lesson, or one more needed by the Church and the Christian, in these days of favor and prosperity?

Because the number of disciples has been greatly multiplied, is there less need of individual fruitfulness? Has not the demand increased in the ratio of the supply? And is not the tendency to bear "nothing but leaves" even greater now than in the olden times of persecution? Then nothing but genuine fruit would pay the cost of culture; but now, in the changed circumstances of the Church, there is danger of taking in lieu of such fruit mere numbers, magnitude, and display.

Every Christian also is exposed to the fatal mistake of regarding the end of growth as consisting in attainments, enjoyments, and the reputation of superior sanctity, rather than in self-forgetful and unostentatious usefulness. It is not impossible for the prevailing luxury of the age to infect the great body of the Church, and for self-indulgence to find a place in Christian experience, under the specious guise of extraordinary religious emotions. Certainly one device of Satan, as he takes the form of an angel of light, is to induce Christians, if possible, to fix their attention solely upon themselves—their various exercises of mind, phases of emotional experience, and comparative attainments in piety—to the utter neglect of the plain every-day duties, the small sweet courtesies and unpretentious labors of true discipleship. If the device succeeds, in such case whatever there may be of growth is wholly introverted and self-absorbed; for it yields no service, produces no fruit for the common good—has “nothing but leaves.”

But the law of the kingdom remains from the beginning unchanged. Love is no selfish sentiment; and faith without works is dead. All the graces of the Holy Spirit, as incorporated in the Christian life, are thoroughly practical in their legitimate outgrowth; and the only warrant of

continued possession is productive use. It is the highest form and application of a law which is common to the whole empire of God, and which was only incidentally illustrated by the fate of the unfruitful fig-tree. Mutual service is the great and universal bond by which "the kingdoms are but one;" for it forms the union of plants, animals, and men—of earth and heaven. In this vast community of life, of which God himself is the center and fountain, service is required of every part, from the lowest to the highest, according to the ability bestowed; and the part which yields no fruit deserves, and ultimately has, no place.

As the spiritual life is the chief department in this scheme of service, and is distinguished by the richest provisions and gifts of God, its productiveness becomes a matter of infinite moment. Here, especially, may be expected the largest returns in all good works, or the inevitable doom pronounced upon barrenness. In short, every interest of the soul, for time and eternity, is involved in this personal and practical question of growth and fruit.

XX.

SUNDRY FACTS OF GROWTH.

THERE is no possible growth without life; for, as we have seen heretofore, growth is essentially a process of life, and as such sustains intimate relations to food, work, warmth, culture, and fruit. In every case the process implies the actual presence and operation of certain mysterious vital forces, whether in the plant, animal, or human soul. No man, therefore, can grow as a Christian until he is "born again," or receives life as a Christian.

There is no substitute for growth. Whether the beginning be large or small, the full consummation can be reached only by gradual increase, according to established conditions. But, as a matter of fact, the beginning is always comparatively small. Since the morning of creation, this has been the settled order of life in all things material and spiritual. Even the God-man was born as the babe of Bethlehem: and in Nazareth "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit." "Jesus increased in wisdom and

stature, and in favor with God and man." "Ye must be born again," is not more imperative than "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." In no other way can any Christian ever attain "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

This growth is of God through the ministration of life, "seeing he giveth to all life, breath, and all things;" "for in him we live, and move, and have our being," and by necessary connection also our growth. Human agency is no more able to impart life and growth than to perform the work of creation. For all vital increase, whether physical or spiritual, we are absolutely dependent upon the continual presence and power of God. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God, that giveth the increase." Spiritual growth is therefore not to be disparaged, as if it were an invention of man, or a substitute for the work of the Holy Spirit.

But human agency is concerned in the process by the use of the means provided. Had not Paul planted and Apollos watered, God had not given the increase. If we are "God's husbandry," we are also "laborers together with God" in the work of husbandry; it being our part both to receive and to use under his directions.

This part is ordinarily well understood and performed in the inferior branches of culture. Can as much be said for the infinitely higher department? Are our souls as diligently cared for as our bodies, or even as our flocks and herds, fields and gardens? Such care would be far more surely and uniformly remunerative; but is it not frequently neglected on the assumption that spiritual growth in some way takes care of itself? No assumption could be more unwarranted or disastrous; for in nothing is it so necessary that we give all diligence to the performance of our allotted part. Here occurs the great mistake which accounts for nearly all the apparent feebleness, imperfection, and failure in Christian life. It is a truth of universal application which is announced in the proverb, "He that will not plow by reason of the cold shall beg in harvest, and have nothing." Spiritual growth is accomplished only by divine power, but never also without human concurrence.

There are striking differences of growth, which are variously determined. Jonah's gourd came up in a night, and perished as soon. Such growth was not a fault, but simply a fact; the gourd fulfilled its purpose. The mammoth trees of California have been growing for more than a thousand years, and are growing still. In nature

and design they are quite unlike the gourd at Nineveh. Of the less extraordinary plants, some come to maturity in a single season, others in two or more, and others only after many years. A similar diversity appears among animals, ranging all the way from the *ephemera*, or insects of an hour, to the human body, with its protracted period of childhood and youth. These differences relate to the quality of growth, the rate of the process, the time occupied, and the degree ultimately attained. They arise in part from variety of circumstances and treatment, but chiefly from peculiarities of constitution.

The plant and the animal have little power of selection, and are dependent upon the conditions in which they are respectively placed. The soul, however, is so far the agent of its own growth as to have almost entire control of the matter. Endowed with a natural capability of unlimited spiritual increase, and provided with means the most abundant and available, the Christian need never be subject to restrictions of time and place. His growth may be rapid, substantial, and continuous from the beginning; and if it be otherwise he has only himself to blame. We know of no limitations of any kind, except such as are self-imposed. Certainly, the approach to maturity or effective

strength is not fixed and bounded by a definite term of either years or months. Is it not strange, then, that so many suffer frequent interruption of growth, or grow so slowly that they never seem to emerge from a state of comparative infancy? Is it generally understood that the differences in this respect, among Christians, are determined solely by their own action in the premises?

The particular means to be employed have been already considered at length, under the topics of Food, Work, Warmth, and Culture. They may be expressed, however, in more general terms as *receiving and using*. This double and reciprocal action comprises the whole of human agency in the process of spiritual growth; but it must be constantly maintained in both parts from the beginning of life. To receive nourishment and warmth only at long intervals—as, for instance, on one day in the week—is to decline, and ultimately to perish. Leaving unused any of the gifts received, has the same effect by cutting off further supplies. “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” The problem is simply to maintain an abundant and vigorous life; and this is done by

faith alone, for "the just shall live by faith." But faith has these two special functions of receiving in habitual meditation and prayer, and then of diligently using in all good works. Let faith have its perfect work—let it be implicit, comprehensive, continuous, the very habit of the soul—and it infallibly secures such vitality as renders growth inevitable. What can be more simple and practicable than this? Surely it is quite within the power of every Christian who really desires to grow.

But growth always corresponds in nature and character to the life of which it is the process and product. It consists in expansion or increase, not only by virtue of an indwelling life, but in all the specific qualities and powers belonging to such life. Spiritual growth, therefore, may be clearly defined and easily tested; for Christ is the only true life of the soul. It is simply to increase more and more in whatever is like Christ, to "grow up into him in all things." This implies the inward existence and vital activity of all the distinctive graces of the Lord Jesus, or his actual dwelling in the soul. These graces are in kind unmistakable; for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever"—the same now in the hearts of believers as when in his own body he went about doing good.

XXI.

THE QUESTION OF GREATNESS.

WHEN the twelve disciples, on their way to Capernaum, "disputed between themselves who should be the greatest," they doubtless thought of official rank, and coveted its dignity and power. If their Lord was about to establish a kingdom somewhat after the manner of men, but with far greater glory—and this was then their expectation—they of course, as his chosen disciples, would be distinguished above all others of his subjects. But "which of them" should have the first and highest place, the position of primate, in this kingdom?

This was the question which gave rise among them to no little reasoning and strife. On the occasion referred to, when Jesus inquired of them concerning the subject of their dispute, "they held their peace," as if ashamed of their contention; but afterward, encouraged by his manner, they submitted the matter to him under the general question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Though the answer

was clear and explicit, such was their persistent misapprehension of it, under the influence of selfish ambition, that at a subsequent period James and John, supported by their mother, made formal application for the two chief places of honor. "And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren," not because of the manifest impropriety of the request, but because each desired the elevated position for himself. Their jealousy was rebuked, and perhaps soothed, by the words of Jesus; but the strife was renewed on other occasions, even to the time of their last interview on the evening of the betrayal.

How very human, how much after the way of the world and its ideas of greatness, was all this rivalry and debate! But was it Christ-like? Was it according to the spirit and laws of the new kingdom about to be established on earth? Did the disciples ever come to a clear knowledge and a hearty acceptance of the truth? And why were they at first, and for so long a time, so dull of comprehension?

Nothing could be more direct and definite, more tender and touching, than the lessons with which they were favored from the Teacher of teachers and the Prince of peace.

First, a little child was set before them;

coming with apparent docility at the call of the Master, and standing there in humble trustfulness, free from all turbulent passions, a striking contrast to these men of ambitious strife. What words of meekness and love accompanied, explained, and applied the symbol! "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name receiveth me." "He that is least among you all, the same shall be great."

This was only the primary lesson. Could they receive it in its simple and most obvious import? Were these strong, full-grown men really required to become like this *little* child—without conscious artifice in self-seeking, with no thought of relative superiority, and no desire to exercise lordship over others? This was strange teaching, quite as new and strange to the world as the Great Teacher himself; but were they not his *disciples*, and therefore ready to learn of him? Ready in attitude, without doubt, but slow of heart and dull of understanding.

The next lesson was given when Salome sought for her sons the post of honor at the right hand and the left of him who was soon to be crucified. Little did she think or know of what was to come to pass at Jerusalem, or how

the places mentioned would then be occupied. Neither she nor the disciples had the remotest idea of being crucified with Christ; but a crisis in affairs was evidently near at hand, and now was the time to secure the coveted appointment. Now also was the Master's opportunity to repeat the former lesson with an important addition. To be great was not only to be meek and lowly in heart, but also to be serviceable in life. The feeling of the child was to find expression in the labor of the servant. "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." "Who-soever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all."

Such was the law of the kingdom. It reversed all human precedents, and established an entirely new standard of honor. Its fundamental principle was not lordship for the gratification of one, but service for the benefit of all. The human passion for exercising authority must, therefore, be practically superseded by divine ambition for the largest usefulness. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." As the greatest service was reserved for the Sovereign himself, so the nearest approach to him in similar service determined the

highest rank in his kingdom. Could the disciples accept the test? Did they even grasp the idea so novel, so at variance with the tendencies of human nature and the course of the world? They had seen the proofs of sovereign power in their Lord, and its subjection to the welfare of men, but had they discerned the spirit and motives of its service?

But the wonderful life was not to close until its greatest lesson had been repeated once again, and by a practical rendering never to be forgotten. The time, place, and manner were well chosen. According to the customs of men, the table had its petty distinctions of place and occasions of jealousy. And so it was even among the disciples of Christ, and at the last Passover. With gentle words he subdued their strife, and cited his own customary work: "For who is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth." This, however, was only the introduction. He ate the Feast of the Passover with them, spoke of his betrayal by one of their number, and instituted a perpetual memorial of his impending death. Then, in immediate connection with this farewell service, when every heart was touched with tenderest sympathy, he who aforetime had com-

manded the winds and the waves, and revoked the doom of the grave, took upon himself the office of the humblest menial, and washed his disciples' feet.

So deeply impressive a scene could never be effaced from their memory.

Here the lesson on emulation and comparative greatness reached its utmost limit; mere teaching could go no further. Was it effectual? Probably not, to the full extent, until the day of Pentecost. Then was received the Spirit of truth, of humility, of self-sacrificing service—the very quality of greatness. The ascended Christ reappeared in the hearts and lives of his followers, and purified them unto himself, “a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” and seeking no other distinction. Disciples then became *Christians*, reducing to practice the lessons of the Gospel, contending no longer for place, “in honor preferring one another.”

And so through all the ages the bright succession runs, a living rebuke of selfishness, and a practical answer to the question of greatness.

XXII.

“ONE IS YOUR MASTER.”

ONLY one, and he is Christ. Jesus is his proper name, given for its significance at his birth; and all other titles are official and descriptive.

The Savior is Sovereign, too—the Messiah long foretold, the Christ of God. “Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am.” And so he continues to be with all true disciples. To receive him as Savior is to accept him as Master. He is the Savior because he is Christ the Lord; and he saves only those who serve. If the one distinction belongs to him alone, so also does the other—to *him alone*. “There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved;” but that name is “above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and in earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Power to pardon is authority to command; and absolute submission is actual salvation. He who

died to redeem now lives to reign, “and he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.”

Does he not justly claim the sole service of the saved? Surely they can understand him when he says to them, “*One* is your Master.”

Because he is the one Lord, all they are alike servants. They may be apostles, or prophets, or teachers, or workers of miracles; they may have gifts of healing, helping, governing, or interpreting—but all are fellow-servants and brethren. Distinction of office is not difference of service. Whatever may be the diversity of gifts, operations, and administrations, they are under one Head, and for the common benefit. If a servant is invested with authority it is only as a servant, and never as a lord over God’s heritage. In every case, the greater the power possessed the more rigid is its subjection to account, and the more abundant are the labors required. If any one station may be considered the highest it is simply because it subserves the largest interests.

The invidious distinctions invented by human selfishness and pride are here utterly abolished; and the only real superiority is found not in title, rank, or age, but in excellence of spirit

and in faithfulness to appointed work. "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, *all of you be subject one to another*, and be clothed with humility." "Neither be ye called master; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

This sole and supreme Headship of Christ is something more than a formal provision of government, or a mere matter of law and prerogative; it is actual, operative, and efficient in the full measure of all demands. To his real servants in every time and place he gives the assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Is this true in fact? Do we heartily and steadily believe it, know it, to be real? Are all our labors consciously performed beneath his eye, at his bidding, with his guidance and help, and as much so as if he were outwardly visible? Present he is, without doubt; but does he stand revealed to the inward sight, and recognized in the actual exercise of his prerogatives? Amid all the complications of human influences and agencies, is he seen in his true character and office, ever living and acting in the fullness of his power as *our own and only Master*?

So it may be, if we are not merely nominal servants. "He that hath my commandments

and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest myself to him.*” This personal manifestation of Christ is to be a real event, a matter of fact; and of course it can take place only through the conscious recognition of the soul when the promise is fulfilled. Then he is seen and known as the unfailingly true and faithful One, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and who is therefore able to execute his will in every particular, despite the mistakes and errors of subordinate agencies. If there be first, on our part, entire and unqualified subjection to him, then, in very fact, through all the details of our service, and with all the perfections of his nature, Christ is our Master.

Let this be fully assured as an accomplished personal fact—Christ *my* Master—and little else is needed for the encouragement of the servant or the interests of the service. It stands forth as the grandest reality of life, full of significance and bright with infinite blessing. To be in all things subject to such a Master is a joy beyond measure. To render faithful service to him, whose love has reached so far and wrought so much, is the highest privilege of the grateful heart. “He loved me and gave himself for me.”

What, then, can I do for him? He himself answers the question by receiving as his servants all who give him the heart, and assigning to every one of them, even to the least, some kind and place of labor.

Does the work which we have done seem too small for his notice? He measures it by the love from which it proceeds.

Is our well-meant service imperfect, like every thing human? As the best we can render, he accepts it without upbraiding.

Is it performed in obscure places, under difficulties, and with little or no human encouragement? The Master knows it all, and appreciates it all; for it is service rendered to him.

Is not this enough? Can there be a nobler or a mightier inspiration for the labors of earth? Love at work for Christ rises superior to infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses; for it has the fellowship of angels and the joy of heaven. In every field of labor, and through all the scenes of time, it looks with unsealed sight upon the invisible, and is satisfied in hearing near at hand the well-known voice, "*One is your Master.*"

XXIII.

A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE.

“ I KNEW a man in Christ above fourteen years ago—whether in the body I can not tell, or whether out of the body I can not tell, God knoweth,—such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I can not tell, God knoweth,—how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

So a man of unquestioned veracity, and every way competent as a witness, once said in a letter to his friends in Corinth. Modestly he omits the *ego*, for he himself was the one who entered heaven and heard the unspeakable words. He vouches for the fact, but attempts no explanation; “whether in the body or out of the body I can not tell, God knoweth.” Concerning the things which he there saw and heard he is entirely silent—quite unlike some modern pretenders—for the words really heard “it is not lawful for a man to utter.” He does not even

mention the matter until after the lapse of fourteen years and never refers to it again. He doubtless derived great personal encouragement from this remarkable experience; but as it was exceptional, and could be of little use to others except through its influence upon himself, he closes his brief and indirect statement of the fact with these words: "But now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me."

There was another experience, however, scarcely less remarkable, of which the modest apostle might speak more freely; for it savored less of self, and came within the range of common Christian privilege. "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then am I strong."

What these infirmities were can not be determined with exactness; but it is certain that they were "given" to him without fault or wrong on his part, and that they involved more or less of weakness and suffering as a means of spiritual discipline. He had not sought them, and he sincerely desired and prayed that they might depart from him; but, in view of the end to be subserved according to the will of God, he was able to rejoice. "Most gladly therefore will I

rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Besides bodily infirmities, he suffered also reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses. These were of no ordinary character, as appears from his own account of them in the same letter.

As the reproaches were undeserved, they brought no feeling of self-condemnation; and yet they were painful, as being unmistakable indications of a spirit of injustice in those who used them, and of determined hostility to his work. Or, did these reproaches come from *brethren*, laboring under the misapprehensions occasioned by ignorance and misrepresentations? They were none the less painful; for he earnestly desired the sympathy and co-operation of his brethren above all others, and was not indifferent to the good opinion and confidence of even the least among them. Though he was an apostle, specially qualified for his great work and entirely devoted to it, he was grandly human in having a heart full of tenderest yearnings toward all men, and fully prized a good reputation as a means of greater usefulness.

But the reproaches—as well as the necessities, persecutions, and distresses—came to him in the faithful, unselfish performance of duty,

while he was consciously animated in every act by the one supreme motive, "for Christ's sake." *Therefore* he found in them all, despite their natural effect, true contentment and genuine pleasure.

But the most remarkable part of this experience remains to be remarked.

Was the apostle strong in himself? He certainly had great mental vigor and physical power of endurance. He had also been greatly strengthened "through the abundance of revelations," and had been wonderfully successful in labors which were yet more abundant. No man had greater personal influence and official power in the Church, or had used such influence and power with greater results for the common good. In all the labors of his life there had been extreme self-forgetfulness. He was habitually "ready, not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." When he resorted occasionally to tent-making, it was merely to supply the otherwise unprovided necessities of life in the uninterrupted work of the apostleship. In prosecuting this work he had acutally suffered the loss of all things, and counted them as nothing, so that he might finish his course with joy and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus. And when he

was driven by misrepresentation to vindicate himself, he did so apologetically, and with evident reluctance. "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me; for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing."

Nevertheless there was danger of his being "exalted above measure," and of becoming self-confident and vain. Not even reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses could prevent this; for with a temperament like his they would tend only to a more decided demonstration of self. That very self must be touched, as when Jacob wrestled with the angel. So to this great apostle—this man of heroic spirit, indomitable energy, and magnificent enterprise in the kingdom of Christ—"there was given a thorn in the flesh."

Then he learned for himself, and afterward illustrated for the Church in every age, the grandest and most important lesson of Christian life and labor. It is a paradox, and to human wisdom may seem an absurdity; but the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for *my strength is made perfect in weakness.*" Such was Paul's happy experience through many years,

according to his own testimony, "For when I am weak then am I strong."

Here, then, is the secret of that marvelous strength by which he approved himself as the minister of God "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." It will never cease to be the wonder of the world, and yet it is nothing more than conscious human weakness fully surrendered to the possession of divine omnipotence.

Let selfish strength take its own measure, lay its schemes, extend its alliances, marshal its forces, and even glory in its triumphs; but, after all, it is only human, and utterly fails of all high achievement for the good of the Church and the glory of the Redeemer. The strength of

God is never revealed and made perfect in man until the independent, self-sufficient, self-seeking, and self-glorying *self* is withered in its strength, pierced in its joy, mocked in its pride, and "crucified with Christ." Then the new man may exclaim, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Happy the man who is in such a state, for in all things he is more than conqueror. Happy the Church composed of such men; who are dead unto the world and alive unto God; who are weak for self and strong for Christ; who fight only the good fight of faith; who do only the work, and seek only the joy, of their Lord.

Is such happiness too much to expect in this intensely selfish and secular age? Human nature doubtless remains strong in many of the members of the Church, because they have not rightly endured the requisite discipline; but surely the leaders and apostles, now as formerly, should be distinguished by the kind of weakness and strength peculiar to what is still a remarkable experience.

XXIV.

LEGITIMATE STRIFE.

DURING the recent terrible war for the maintenance of the Union, two kinds of strife were carried on simultaneously. Though closely related in operation, they were entirely different in motive and manner, character and effect.

One was martial strife on hundreds of bloody battle-fields. It has its oft-told tales of enlistments and drafts, equipments and drills, marches and camps, intrenchments and sieges, reconnoissances and battles, hospitals and prisons, wounds and death, fearful disasters and final victory. Hundreds of thousands of noble citizens, from the boy in his teens to the man of gray hairs, went from their peaceful avocations and homes to suffer and die. Many of them, who had been conspicuous in peace by their talents and position, enlisted and served as private soldiers. As brothers in a common cause, they had no jealousies of office and rank, no thought of honor and emolument. They were

animated by only one purpose—speedily to crush rebellion, and thereby save the country from its infatuated foes, and perpetuate the institutions, under which they had lived, unimpaired to future generations. At the fearful cost of their toil and strife, sacrifice and blood, continued through four long, eventful years, the Government was upheld, the nation yet survives, and the land consecrated to freedom enters upon a career of progress and prosperity unprecedented in the world's history.

But while these vast issues were still pending, while immense armies were in the field, and the whole country was alternating between hope and fear, watching every military movement with bated breath, and pouring out its treasure without stint, strife of another kind was going on among politicians and generals. It was the old, old question, Who shall be the greatest? Who shall have the credit of the campaign, and the applause of the country? Who shall win the laurels, and be the hero of the war? Or, if military glory be not attainable, and party predominance must be left to future developments, who shall wring from the necessities of war the largest financial gains? For both the profit and the renown there were countless aspirants, who regarded success as depending more upon favor and position than upon real merit.

So the strife for office raged. Had a superior fallen? His place must at once be secured. Did a probable competitor for prospective honors appear upon the scene? He must be put out of the way, by fair means or foul, before becoming too formidable. In official correspondence, in the council-chamber, and even on the sanguinary field, the jealousies of political and military rivals often carried the day. Let the battle be lost, and the campaign prove a failure, rather than give the credit of victory to another. What were all the interests of the army and of the country, as staked upon the speedy and triumphant termination of the war, when compared with the prestige of party, or the success of mercenary or ambitious personal schemes? No battle-field of the war was ever more hotly contested than the award of lucrative contracts and the possession of places of power.

In comparing these two kinds of strife, we scarcely need to ask which was honorable, useful, and legitimate, or whether both alike were so. The difference was too strikingly manifested, and is too well remembered, to leave room for a single doubt.

If any thing can justify the deadly conflict of arms, and the pouring out of the nation's treasure and blood, it is the preservation of the

nation's life, the support of its rightful authority, and the maintenance of liberty, order, and peace. These ends involve almost every thing dear to man in his present state. If war is necessary to secure them, and is properly conducted, then it is unquestionably honorable and legitimate. Such was the strife which awakened the patriotism, developed the manhood, and called into exercise many of the most exalted virtues of the American people.

But of the other kind, what can be said? It may be asked, "Is it not right to strive for property, for position, for power?" Only by legitimate means, justly and honorably—never to the injury of others, or to the sacrifice of common interests. Then, however, it almost, if not altogether, loses the character of strife, and becomes the modest and noble competition of thoroughly tested ability and genuine merit. But the sordidly greedy and unscrupulously ambitious claimants upon the patronage of Government cared for no such conditions, and aimed only at success by any means and at any cost. Their plotting strife proved nearly as formidable and fatal as the rebellion itself, and has long since been branded with universal execration.

Now, if we turn from the State to the Church, shall we still find the same kinds of strife—the

legitimate and the illegitimate—carried on together? Does human nature repeat itself on the new field, and under the more direct administration of divine government?

One kind of warfare is certainly authorized, and enjoined upon all Christians as individuals, and as organized bodies or Churches. They are to take the whole armor of God, that they may be able to withstand all the forces of evil. With weapons which are not carnal, but mighty through God, they are also to go forward aggressively to the pulling down of the strongholds of ignorance, error, and sin. They are to fight the good fight of faith, obeying orders and enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. They are to strive together in prayer one for another, and in all mutual helpfulness against the common foe. In motive and manner, character and effect, their strife is most beneficent, exalted, and glorious. Following their triumphant head, they go from conquest to conquest, until they lay their trophies at his feet and are crowned with eternal life.

Human nature is the same every-where—in ecclesiastical as in civil affairs—until it is regenerated in the new life of love, and thus made to partake of the divine nature. It is human nature, with more or less of its old life, which

sets Ephraim against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim—which turns the sword against its fellow, divides the hosts of the Lord into contending factions, and so long delays the final conquest of the world. In the separate organizations of the Church, and the administration of their internal affairs, it is the same human nature that sets brother against brother in jealous rivalry, secret intrigue, or open contention for superior place. In their conferences and councils, plans and appointments, it is continually reappearing in the character of Diotrephes, “who loveth to have the pre-eminence,” and uses all his influence to obtain it. Human nature of this type every-where seeks its own gratification by any means promising success, adapts itself to the machinery and methods of the Church as readily as to those of the State, and finds among brethren the objects of its strife at almost any point, from the office of Sunday-school Superintendent to the honors of the Episcopacy. If it is placed under the greater restrictions of opposing public sentiment in the Church, and would be sure of defeat by exposure, it needs only to be the more subtle in its disguises and the more artful in its management; in which case it may obtain for a time even the reputation of superior sagacity and

strength. Poor human nature! and the very poorest when most successful!

It may be that Diotrephes is not the representative of any considerable class in the Church. For the honor of the Church, let us believe that he is not. But it is nevertheless true that, in Church or State, especially in time of war, he is a most dangerous character. He would not receive even the beloved John, because the apostle was somehow in his way, and interfered with his plans of pre-eminence. Now, as formerly, he is addicted to strife; and such strife within the Church is only so much aid and comfort given to the enemy without. If once allowed to find place, if tolerated at all, it may prove as dangerous to the militant Church as it was to the struggling nation.

The fact is, and it should never be forgotten, that there is no blessing of God, no union or strength, no safety or success, no worthy or final promotion, except in entire devotion to Christ on the appointed field and in the one legitimate strife.

XXV.

THE BEST PLACE.

THE supposed best places are also supposed to be few. The nation can have but one constitutional President, whose chief counselors are as small in number as they are distinguished in position. The Senate and the House of Representatives, constituting the national Congress, are kept within definite bounds by the roll of the States and the returns of the census. Seats in the supreme judiciary are occupied for life; but the bench is short and vacancies are rare. And so it is with all the coveted places of power, honor, and emolument in both State and Church. They are open to universal competition, but can be obtained by only a definite number.

Perhaps it is because they are so few in comparison with the possible candidates that they are so eagerly sought and highly prized. They seem to be estimated, like the precious metals and stones, according to their rarity, and the sort of distinction they are therefore supposed to confer upon the fortunate possessor. But are

they, for this reason, really better than other places?

The great diamond "Kohinoor" is a rare and celebrated gem, but it has no intrinsic worth corresponding to its enormous valuation among the crowned heads of Europe. Aside from its possible use in the arts, its value is altogether factitious, depending solely upon conventional estimate and the demands of royal pomp and display. In real service to mankind, "Webster's Spelling-book" is of far greater importance. But it often happens under conventional rule that the most brilliant, rather than the most useful, is accounted the best; and this is as true of places as it is of mere decorations.

In our own country popular estimate is substituted for royal caprice; but it tends just as rigidly to rule the rates of value. How is this or that place quoted among the people? What does the press say of it? How much will it bring in the way of distinction or influence or ease or the money which answereth all things? In short, what is the weight and quality of the diamond? Or, is it no diamond at all, but simply a piece of polished glass? The real jewel of a place, rare, and resplendent with a luster which it reflects upon its distinguished possessor—that by the decree of selfish ambition is proclaimed to be the highest

prize. But is personal distinction or any special gratification of self the test and proof of superior excellence of place? Perhaps so as the world goes, and according to a shallow, short-sighted, and utterly false philosophy of life.

But the truth is, place is only the means and opportunity of use, and derives all its value from that fact. It is the setting, while the man himself is diamond or glass, or infinitely more than either, according to his intrinsic qualities.

A diamond is a diamond, whether glittering on the brow of the prince or utilized in the tool of the artisan; and glass is no more than glass, though wrought with the skill of the lapidary and set in the finest gold; but each has its own best place. Glass is doubtless of far greater value to the world than diamonds—not as a substitute for diamonds, but in the numerous beneficent uses to which it is adapted; and, happily, that which is most useful is also most abundant. So among men. Few have the brilliancy which dazzles and charms, while all have in some degree the power to be useful; and the wide average ability well employed does in fact accomplish greater good than the most splendid genius.

But whatever any man's ability may be, it is only with that he can occupy any place, and it is therefore by that his place should be determined.

The main consideration is mutual fitness in order to the greatest good of the greatest number. It is simply a question of the right man for the right place, and the right place for the man; and wherever any one can render the best service, there certainly is his best place.

So it seems that under the law of adaptation and service for the common good there are as many best places as there are persons ready to fill them; that is to say, every human being may have what to him is the very best place.

How to find it, is the next question. It can not safely be left to the chances of the market, nor to the influence of the false ambition which seeks place for the sake of place, without regard to fitness or usefulness. In order to reach a right decision, one's own judgment doubtless should be exercised, modestly and dispassionately. But is there no infallible guide on which we may safely rely?

Happily for all who are willing to be guided, infinite wisdom and power are fully engaged in the case.

In the bodies of men and animals, every one of almost countless organs, even the weakest and most insignificant, has its own best place; for "God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him." So has he

done also in every assignment of place throughout the universe, from the sun riding in the heavens to the insect which floats for an hour in its evening beams. So minute and particular is this divine supervision that every molecule of sustenance taken by either plant or animal goes directly to its proper place in the organism. It is by such specific assignment of particles that the same food is made to supply widely different parts, and becomes in the plant stalk or leaf or fruit, and in the animal nerve or muscle or bone. And does God care less for the place and work of human beings? Has he no well-ordered and comprehensive plan, no direct and special supervision for the noblest creatures of his hand? How much more in their life than anywhere else may we look for the display of his wisdom and power. If God uses the affinities and instincts of inferior things for their direction, he surely has means and methods just as effectual for us; and on condition of our intelligent, hearty, and unqualified submission to the various expressions of his will, he does infallibly guide us every one to that which in his estimate is our best place.

The practical use of this great truth is manifold. It takes God into our council rather than flesh and blood. It turns ambition and effort in the direction of personal qualification and useful-

ness instead of this or that conspicuous position. It is an effectual antidote to the petty jealousies and strifes which agitate and curse both the world and the Church. It solves a great problem with absolute certainty, for God is able to accomplish the purpose of his wisdom, despite all conflicting human agencies. And so it brings to the faithful servant a serenity and gladness, an inspiration and power, a nobility and moral grandeur all unknown to the anxious self-seeker, while it lifts every providential lot in life, whether honored or unhonored by the world, to the same exalted plane of a common and divine service.

Happy, thrice happy, is the man, the woman, the child who seeks only from God the best place.

XXVI.

“PRAY FOR US.”

IT is a significant fact that the Apostle Paul was accustomed to make this request both for himself and for his associates. Sometimes he expressed it in much stronger terms, as when he said to the Romans, “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.” Like a chieftain addressing his warriors, he charged the Ephesians to gird themselves for the conflict, and to pray always, “watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints,” but closed his appeal with the words, “*and for me.*” So in his second letter to the Thessalonians he gave special prominence to the request, “*Finally*, brethren, pray for us.” Nor did he forget to render the same service in behalf of others, whom he constantly encouraged with the assurance, “Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.”

This request is the more remarkable as coming

from the chief of the apostles, and as addressed to Churches which under his ministry had been raised up among the heathen only a little while before. Doubtless they needed his prayers, but why should he require theirs? It certainly was not from any defect in his own faith; for he had obtained help from God when forsaken of all men, and by his word of faith had been the means of converting multitudes from idolatry. The prayers which he offered for others would be even more effectual in his own behalf, because he so fully complied with the personal conditions on which the answer depended. The case forbids the supposition of any doubt, hesitation, or weakness on the part of the great apostle to the Gentiles; and yet it was no idle form or flattering compliment when he said to young and old, weak and strong—to all alike—“*Pray for us.*”

This is the language of the heart, and it gives utterance to a feeling which belongs to human nature even in its best estate, and is in no respect unapostolic. Paul felt the need of human sympathy in his work for Christ, and endeavored to secure it by the most effective method—by joining the petitions of the people with the intercessions of their Lord, and bringing the whole Church into living sympathy with its Head. His request, we may be sure, was in perfect

accordance with the will and plan of Him who has given special promise to even “two who shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask.”

The earnest repetition of this request by any one is a practical recognition of that community of thought, feeling, and labor which distinguishes the kingdom of the Messiah. In this kingdom both natural and conventional distinctions are either abolished or absorbed, and all men are brought together in the unity of a common spirit and aim; for here “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.” Nothing tends so powerfully to perfect and establish this community of interest as the mutual service of prayer “around one common mercy-seat.” Answering alike the yearnings of the heart and the demands of the cause, it is a universal and imperative necessity; and now more than ever before.

With the vast increase and prosperity of the Church, a division of labor into numerous departments under separate organizations becomes indispensable; and this is attended with more or less liability to mutual jealousy and conflict—culminating sometimes in the sad reality. On the withdrawal of the open opposition which

once compelled the sympathy of a common cause, and with the present substitution of the insidious competition of worldly and selfish interests, there is special need of this bond of union. It is the one great demand of the hour in every part of the Christian Church.

Just as the various denominations cherish the habit of prayer, equally fervent, for all who work for Christ, they reduce their necessary differences to the lowest point, and meet on the common field, in happy fellowship, without bigotry or suspicion.

When Christians come to God *with full hearts* in behalf of the unconverted millions of the world, they are brought into active and practical sympathy with the missionary on the most distant outpost.

If ministers pray one for another, they will rejoice each in the other's advancement and success. If the ministry pray for the laity and the laity for the ministry, and do this habitually and earnestly, no distrust, rivalry, or antagonism can intervene.

The relation of the Sunday-school to the Church settles itself—indeed, as a question, it never occurs—when the two are one in prayer. The home is never so near the Church, nor the Church so like the home, as when in each the other is remembered with fervent supplication.

No pastor can be successful among the people without following the apostolic example ; and no people can be true to their obligations while neglecting reciprocal service. Nor is this less necessary with parents and Sunday-school teachers.

Every Christian at work finds in his own prayers a fountain of perpetual inspiration, and in the prayers of others a broad channel through which it may flow unimpeded. Nothing develops individual activity, or harmonizes the labors of a multitude, like concurrent prayer. It is the very nerve-force of organization, and the life-bond of the Church.

How far this demand remains unsupplied, is a question in which all are interested ; for the very weakest disciple, though unable to do any thing else, can pray for others. The “Week of Prayer” appointed by the Evangelical Alliance, and now generally observed throughout Christendom at the beginning of each year, is a hopeful sign and a fair promise ; but it is too short by just the distance between the second Sabbath in January and the end of the year. A whole life of such prayer consummated in eternal praise—this alone will meet the necessities of the case and the appointment of God. If the Scriptures were really designed to apply to this busy age and in this busy land of ours, then

prayer must become a part of the business of the busiest, and so remain till the latest breath.

Under this rule the subjects of prayer might be greatly extended, and the mention of any notable omissions would not be altogether fruitless. For instance, the general executive officers of the Church are said to have a smaller share in the prayers of the people than when they were regular pastors, though with the change their responsibilities have certainly increased. The teachers in our institutions of learning, from the common-school to the college and university,—are they mentioned in prayer beyond the circle of their own families? The very thought of what they are doing should send every heart heavenward in their behalf. And last, though not least, are the writers and editors, whose words are multiplied by thousands and sent all over the land, full freighted with good or evil. In secluded chambers, remote from the people, they wield with throbbing hearts the mighty engine of the press. If they could be heard in their own behalf, how many of all these workers would say, with apostolic earnestness, “Pray for us!”

XXVII.

“WHO CARES FOR ME?”

THE question is not, Who provides for me, watches over me, or performs any actual service? While it may mean all this, it goes much deeper, and inquires for the care which is felt in the heart. Who takes any interest in my personal welfare, any thought or concern for me as one among the great multitude of the race? It must be for me as an individual, for what I am, not for what I happen to possess or may be able to do. Whether the question implies doubt that any one cares, or would specify and distinguish those who certainly do care, it always points to something heart-felt and personal.

Such questioning is the voice of human nature, the cry of every soul. First heard in infancy, and answered in the tender love of parents and all the happy provisions of home, it is carried forward through all the years of life, not as a lingering remnant of unweaned babyhood, but as the inmost demand of a nature which can never outgrow itself.

The man may look with scorn upon a condition of dependence, and reject all offers of help; he may be able in body and mind to care for himself and for others too; he may have such talents and wealth and power that many turn to him for aid; and yet it is all the same. The need is still there if he remains a man. In his very best estate his soul will find utterance, not perhaps in the ears of others, but certainly in its own deep recesses.

It is even doubtful whether human nature can ever be so perverted and destroyed as to lose all conscious interest in the question. The man who cares for nobody, and becomes an enemy to society, proceeds on the assumption that nobody cares for him, and is only seeking revenge for disappointed desires. In the lowest depths of degradation and crime he still retains the constitution of a human being, and in some way gives evidence of its imperative need.

Since this yearning of the soul is a part of our very nature, it is sheer folly to treat it as a weakness either in ourselves or in others. To conceal, repress, or ridicule it as something to be ashamed of, and to cherish in its stead a stoical indifference, is no way to become stronger. Whether a weakness or not, like hunger and thirst, it must be satisfied in order to the health and vigor of the soul.

Body and soul alike are constituted to subsist and thrive in a state of dependence, and their healthful cravings are only the calls for supplies, the natural language of this dependence, and the very means through which strength is acquired and maintained. In either case, continued repression or denial reacts with the most injurious effect, producing those morbid conditions in which the man becomes a prey to himself. Perfect mental soundness can not long survive under a fixed conviction of being cut off from all sympathy and regard. So the affection of a dumb brute is better than nothing; and prisoners in solitary confinement have often found delight in the interested companionship of even a mouse or a spider. No feeling of human nature is more deeply seated and powerful or more sacred and honorable than that which seeks for personal recognition and love.

This feeling is evidently designed to subserve a most important purpose through its adaptation to our actual relations.

We were not made to live alone as mere individuals, separated from God and our fellows in repellent self-absorption and self-sufficiency. As a matter of fact, we are not alone and never can be. While retaining a distinct and separate individuality, we are necessarily and constantly in

some sort of connection with others. But the connection is nothing more than mere contact, like that of sand upon the seashore, until love performs its office.

Here, then, is an effective provision for the closest union of heart with heart, the vital inter-linking of one being with another. It is only this strong natural desire to be loved that gives to love itself all its marvelous power, making it the mightiest moral force of the universe, the chosen agency of human redemption, and the happy bond of one vast family. If there were no demand, the supply would be a matter of indifference, and the work of love would be without effect. For all the best interests of the race, therefore, nothing is more important than this universal desire of the heart, and no more hopeful sign is ever found than the question it asks.

The answer, as coming from man, is often seriously insufficient, although He who created the demand has also made abundant provision for the human supply.

The family was expressly instituted to be a perpetual fountain of loving care. In all its relations, from infancy to age, its highest and holiest mission is to satisfy the heart, so far as human love is capable of satisfying. Alas! that it should ever degenerate into a mere dwelling-place for the

body, or become the abode of mutual indifference or hate. The true home is where the heart is always sure of its answer, so that it turns thither through all its desert wanderings as to a fountain of living waters.

But the fountain should send forth its streams by the wayside, and many together should be sufficient to make the wilderness glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. The family is the type and source of another institution as broad as humanity. “God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth;” “and all ye are brethren.” Corresponding blessings should therefore go forth into the universal brotherhood for the refreshment of every human heart. If the natural supply is not enough for such wide distribution, after meeting the nearer demand, He who made the water to gush from the rock in the wilderness is able also so to smite our selfishness that, in like manner, there shall be no lack for either man or beast. Then shall we all love as brethren, having the same care one for another, and the heart shall never turn in vain to its fellow.

But no human love is able or was ever designed fully to satisfy our demands. At the best it is like the water of Jacob’s well; for “whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again,”

and again "come hither to draw." Moreover, such wells are often dry or soon exhausted. Not yet have all the rocks been smitten, and even where the opening process seems to have been performed, their supplies are sometimes so meagre or so wasted in the sand that they never reach the thirsty soul. But God himself provides for every deficiency by his own wonderful and all-sufficient love. Indeed, he has so constituted the soul that its chief demands can be met by no other than himself. Only his love can suffice, and to every man it is made unceasingly available in Christ. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

By such inward revelation of his Spirit, as well as by the promises of his Word and the blessings of his providence, the All-loving One distinguishes the very least among the children of men, and answers the question, "Who cares for me?"

XXVIII.

"THE YOUNG CHILD."

ADAM and Eve, alone, of all the race, had no childhood. Perhaps they needed none. Perhaps they knew by intuition all that must now be learned by the slow and painful process of early years. For aught we know, they were created with such strength and perfection of mind, as well as of body, that they required no long course of preparatory discipline for life in Eden. And yet they signally and sadly failed in their first great trial.

Would the result have been different, if they had grown up slowly from a condition of infancy under a system of careful instruction and training? Perhaps not, though the question is naturally suggested by the present well-known laws of mind. It is very certain, that no one now would be competent to meet the responsibilities of mature life, without the preparation provided for by the previous period of childhood and youth.

But why did not "the second Adam," like

the first—why did not the Lord Jesus Christ—come into the world a full-grown man, and ready to enter at once upon his mission of help and healing?

Such would probably have been the statement, had the story of his life been a mere fabrication. Human invention would never have thought of assigning the manifestation of God in the flesh to the inferior estate of infancy. And what was possible in Eden, was not impossible in Bethlehem. Christ came from heaven, where he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; and when he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, it certainly was within the range of his power to appear in fashion as a man fully matured. Besides, it could not have been necessary for him, “of whom are all things, and by whom are all things,” to undergo any process of gradual development in human form as a preparation for his work.

Nevertheless, he himself chose to enter the world as a little child, and in very fact became the one of whom the angel said to the shepherds: “This shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

The perfect human childhood of our Lord is

doubtless in some respects a mystery, whose depths can never be fathomed in the present life; and yet it was evidently an essential part of his earthly mission, every appointment of which, from first to last, was made with infinite wisdom. It must therefore have some important purpose to serve in behalf of the world, and may well be made the subject of reverent and loving thought, especially on each annual recurrence of the Christmas festival. If our “looking unto Jesus” takes the range of his wonderful life, we certainly can not overlook “the young child.”

The lesson of utter self-abnegation was not taught more impressively on the cross itself than in the manger of the wayfarer’s inn. There Christ, the Lord, took the lowest place among the crowd of Galilean tax-payers. Though his birth was announced by angels, as “good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people,” his bed was with the beasts of the stall. This was the earthly court of the King of kings, where he received the homage, not of princes and nobles, but of humble shepherds and strangers from afar.

But the scene of the manger was only the beginning. Such poor hospitality, in the very city of David, was soon followed by the necessary flight under cover of darkness into a foreign land. The place of early bondage became the

refuge of the great Deliverer. When they were dead who had sought the young child's life, he found a sanctuary and home in the obscure and disreputable village of Nazareth, where he was known simply as the carpenter's son. For thirty long years he made himself of no reputation with the great and noble of the land, nor was he received in his true character even among his own kinsfolk and acquaintances; and afterward, while ministering to multitudes with omnipotent power, he had not where to lay his head.

Well may the world linger in thought around the cradle of the Redeemer, and endeavor to learn its lessons; for it is the true and significant type of his whole earthly estate. Calvary was only the sequel of Bethlehem.

But the picture of Christ's voluntary humiliation, which is so heavy with earthly shadows, is relieved by tintings of light as soft as the radiance of "his star in the east," and as bright as the glory which beamed upon the shepherds.

In the foreground with the manger is the mother—"the young child and his mother." If the tender ministries of woman never before had such a place, surely they never had such an object. But what was the manger, with a mother's love and care? If there was no room in the inn for the infant form of the Son of God, there was

no lack of it in the maternal heart. The shepherds paid him their homage, and returned to their flocks; the wise men offered their worship with gifts presented from ample treasures, and then departed into a distant country; but Mary rendered the ceaseless tribute of adoring love and faithful service through all the years, even to the last. Night and day she was with him in Bethlehem, in Egypt, and in Nazareth—the inseparable companion of his infancy, childhood, and youth. While the world knew not its wonderful guest, and rejected him, she cherished him with a fondness greatly intensified by the knowledge, which comes from long-continued intimacy in the hallowed relationship of mother in a humble home. In the maturity of his manhood and during his public ministry, she was his mother still, and followed him with her devotion even to the cross, where in his dying agony he recognized her presence.

Can heaven itself furnish a more beautiful and touching picture of mutual love and service? Can the maternal office ever receive higher sanctity and honor? And what could be more befitting and significant than such agency of woman in the world's redemption? Permitted to render the first services required by the Redeemer, she continues to hold the place of honor

in the early nurture of all the redeemed. Her mission will never be accomplished until she accompanies the last child of her love from the cradle to the cross.

If the opening scene of the Gospel narrative appeals to the heart of woman, it also touches all her children.

The Son of God, as the child of Mary, comes into the closest relationship with every human being. By a separate creation, even in perfect human form, he would have been excluded from the unity of the race; but now, by his birth, he becomes *One of us*—"bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." He belongs, as a natural descendant, to the one great family whom he came to redeem; "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren." "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren," not that he might know them, but that they might know him as one of their own number, and feel the power of his sympathy, and be assured of his faithfulness and ability as their representative. But this intimate relationship begins with earliest infancy, where all life begins; and so it is carried on through the successive stages of growth to maturity. The babe in every human habitation has a

brother in the Babe of Bethlehem; and the children of every hamlet on the face of the earth have a friend in the Boy of Nazareth. Old age itself acknowledges the tender tie by its interest in the little ones, and its own cherished memories of early years.

Surely, by childhood the whole world is made akin; and next to the cross, in power to reach the human heart, is the lowly cradle of "the young child"—God's only-begotten Son.

XXIX.

HOME POWER.

IT was wise counsel that the minister gave the young people of his congregation, when in the course of a sermon on home life he recommended marriage at the earliest suitable age, but very earnestly charged them never to dare to marry except for love—genuine, unselfish love. Such counsel, supported by appropriate reasons, though somewhat unusual in the pulpit, seemed eminently befitting; for it was in full accord with the Scriptures, and of real practical importance.

The substitution of any other motive is a positive desecration of the divine ordinance. True love is the fundamental law, the soul, and the sanctity of marriage. It may be regarded as an adaptation to this relation, a distinct and special form of one of the most wonderful forces in the universe,—a force subtle in its nature, multiform in its operations, and almost unlimited in its power. True love, indeed, is always essentially the same, differing only in that which is

incidental, as its object, occasion, etc. Its practical effect, in this as in other forms, is to subdue selfishness, purify passion, refine manners, assimilate character, induce sacrifices, lighten service, and vitalize life. It is absolutely indispensable to the happiness of a relation at once so intimate and so potential in all human interests.

We do not wonder that such love has large place in the illustrations and requirements of Christianity. Its general acceptance, according to the counsel of the preacher and his Book, will effectually lift society out of the slough of divorces, and establish a reform far beyond the reach of legislators, and quite unknown to the filthy dreams of modern free-lovers. Nothing else has power to restore the lost paradise, and reopen Eden in the dwellings of men.

Another special form of the love-force is parental affection. When this affection is only instinctive, and so far analogous to that of brutes, it is comparatively weak, and is easily overcome by any conflicting passion. In such cases it proves to be a very incompetent keeper, and may even offer in sacrifice the child's life, as has often been done in some of the horrid rites of paganism. But Christianity provides, by its teachings and spirit, for the re-enforcement and elevation of the natural instinct, by

developing an affection which is stronger than death, and which always seeks the good of its object.

What besides a deep and unselfish love is able to meet the peculiar demands of childhood,—the incessant care of its helplessness, the patient instruction of its ignorance, the tender correction of its waywardness and folly, the faithful nurture and training of all its varied faculties? But this is equal to the task—a task no longer.

Thus inspired the father, as bread-winner, cheerfully toils early and late, the mother forgets her weariness in maternal joys, and both renew their lives in the budding life of their offspring. Condole with such parents on the cost and drudgery of rearing a family of children, and the only reply will be a look of pitying wonder. Love has a marvelous power of transfiguration, investing its object with a glory never seen by other eyes, and lifting its service up from drudgery to the dignity of a royal ministry.

If parental affection were always of this type, and duly enlightened as to the real welfare of children, the little ones would never be sacrificed, nor in any way neglected, at the bidding of fashion, or covetousness, or indolence. The divine right of parents, in the chief care and

instruction of their young immortals, is far too precious and responsible a right to be easily surrendered to servants and teachers; and love insists upon maintaining its prerogatives.

One of the most important of these prerogatives is the development of love in the heart of the child. Filial affection is said to be naturally weaker than parental, and if so it needs special cultivation.

How shall this be secured? Life springs from life, love from love. The child's first love is a natural response to the call of the mother's heart, love answering love; and as it begins, so it increases and extends to father, brothers, sisters, and then higher and wider still. Love can be taught and learned only by its own operation. "We love him because he first loved us," gives its natural philosophy in a word, and is as true in human as in divine relations. But even the love which is given to God, when his love becomes known, needs this preliminary awakening of the heart, this development of the capacity of loving obtained in the nursery of domestic affections. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

With this early and easy beginning and nurture, love may grow from the mere susceptibility

into a strong and ruling habitude, ready to respond to all the claims of God and man. When it is of the right quality, genuine and unselfish,—and this always implies careful culture and divine aid,—it becomes the very life of parental government, of filial obedience, of fraternal service, of domestic happiness. In itself the richest inheritance which parents can ever bestow, it amply repays the early investment by yielding grateful reverence through their advancing years, and by waiting in tender ministries upon the tottering footsteps of their decline.

Thus *homē* becomes a heart word, a center of attraction, a source of blessedness, a seat of power, a type and vestibule of heaven—all by the gentle might of love.

On a little larger scale, the world itself is a home, and the human race a family. Such, at least, is their natural constitution—a home of homes, a family of families and fragments of families. Here the field and the need are alike boundless. In the absence of love fearful disorders prevail. Shall the unity of the race ever become any thing more than a barren ethnological fact, a mere oneness of blood derived from some remote ancestral head? Alas! the closest affinity of blood could not restrain the murderous hand of the man first-born, and first to know the

name of brother; nor has it since established any true and inviolable kinship in the earth. But here, too, love is equal to the magnitude and difficulty of the work. Coming down from God out of heaven, incarnated in the only-begotten Son, represented by the Church as a general agency, and nurtured in Christian homes at the very fountains of human life, love is the mighty power of the world's reform.

If all homes were thoroughly Christian in their light and love, the problem would soon be solved. The whole takes the character of its parts. Like the families, like the nations. Society at large has less intimate relations than those of the domestic circle, but it is composed of the same members, deals with the same nature, has the same evil of selfishness, and requires the same power of love. But because the homes of men are not all nurseries of love, those which are must work beyond their own limits through the organized action of the Church and the direct influence of personal intercourse. The spirit and law of the home must be carried into the broader relationship of humanity, and into the wider action of daily life in business and society. The brother in feeling must win the brother in name; the love of one heart must gain the love of other hearts; but above all, and by every device of

heart-taught skill, the homes and strongholds of the world must be brought into the domain of love, the kingdom of God.

Toward this glorious consummation all true love is steadily working, whether it be conjugal, parental, filial, or fraternal, in the small or the larger circle. In its purity it is God's love, manifested through his Son, reproduced in human hearts by the Holy Spirit, and adapted to all possible human relations; and every-where it is mighty to win the heart and make the home. Its final and crowning triumph is the heavenly home. Earth would be poor indeed, and our life a sad failure, but for the divinely given home power.

XXX.

HOME WORK.

YES, that is what we mean—not house work. The latter may be important enough for discussion, and is certainly worthy of being held in all honor; but it is only a part of home work, if the home is any thing more than the house.

The home builds and occupies the house, and confers upon it the honor of an intimate and necessary association, but without surrendering its own distinctive superiority. This is never lost by alliance with even the humblest cottage, for it depends upon something besides the excellence of a mere habitation. “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests,” but only the children of men have homes. Just so far as men are like beasts and birds, they require similar provision—a suitable dwelling-place with its appropriate service. Because they rise far above “all things which dwell,” they form the home, bring their glory and honor into it, and need its highest, noblest work.

The nature of the institution determines the character of its work.

Home means life in its largest sense—its beginning, direction, development, and support. If this be not so, what signifies the permanence or sanctity of the marriage relation, the long period of childhood, the influence of the parent over the child, the strength and purity of domestic love, or the connection of character with the “promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come?”

The institution of the family has been transmitted from Eden, and preserved in the world under the seal of a perpetual ordinance of God for the benefit of human souls. Like every other ordinance of God, it has a purpose and holds a place in his comprehensive scheme of provisions and agencies for the elevation of the race to fellowship with himself. It is in intimate connection with all other agencies to this great end, and like them is taken under divine direction, and fully furnished for the part it has to perform.

And what an admirable part is this. The home is the school of character, where mind acts upon mind with unequaled advantages, where the subtle influences of the heart come into play in their amplest force, where living souls may be fashioned by all the ministries of love and truth

after the mold of heavenly spirits, and fitted for their fellowship in the skies. Here is the place of power and responsibility, greater than any other on earth, the cradle of destiny, God's own school of training for life and immortality. Here parents and children are both teachers and learners, while God himself appoints the lessons, orders the discipline, imparts the wisdom, supports the life, and gathers to heavenly mansions the ripened results.

Between the lowliest home on earth and our Father's house on high there is ever unseen mysterious communication and frequent transfer—angels coming and loved ones going. Earth and heaven here are joined, and the home below leads like a vestibule to the home above. Oh, the dignity, the moral grandeur of this birthplace and nursery of young immortals! Who is sufficient for its work?

It seems strange to us that woman, the priestess of God in this home temple, should restlessly aspire to the privileges and honors of any other service—passing strange—because this is the grandest work permitted to mortals, a work in which all heaven is interested, and God himself is partner.

We can conceive of no higher sphere of ambition. Home is the fountain of Church and State,

the arbiter of human destinies, the throne of the world. The home work makes or mars all else. Without its due performance, laws are enacted and even the Gospel is preached in vain, and the learning and wealth of the world become the ministers of corruption and death.

Here, then, at the fountain head of influence, holding the balances, and reigning undisputed queen, is woman—the wife, mother, daughter, sister. Oh, that every one might see the vast relations of her own home work, and rise to the measure of its demand!

But others bear a part in this work of the home. Here the humble toiler among the briers and thorns of the fields and shops and marts of the world may lay aside the garb of servitude and put on his royal robes. The highest office of the lord of the manor is to sow the seed and train the growth whose fruitage is eternal life. By what he does and says and is, as husband, father, son, or brother, he contributes to this work, to its ways and means, its glory and reward. All else in his life is subordinate and preparatory to this. This is the end which glorifies his toil, and lifts him to the dignity of a workman of God. This is the compensation for a lost Eden, this is sovereignty regained, and the highest sphere of redeemed manhood.

And all this is only the work of Christian teaching, so often crowded into the smallest space or made to take the lowest place or altogether left to hireling hands. But it is the work to which Christian teaching in every other form is auxiliary and supplemental—the first and greatest of all.

Blinded by the glare of the world's false lights, many may still fail to see its infinite moment, its supreme grandeur and obligation, and turn the work of the home into a life of sordid gains and vain ambitions, awaking to the truth only when man's work is done. But let all whose eyes have been enlightened from above invoke the aid of heavenly powers, and with head and heart and hands do the home work for eternity.

XXXI.

HINTS FOR THE HOME WORK.

THINK ABOUT IT. When the home is valued chiefly for the convenience and comfort it affords in the struggle for a living, rather than for its magnificent opportunities of doing good, we may be sure that very little intelligent thought has been given to the subject. It is through the agency of the Christian home, aided by the school, the press, and the pulpit, that the world is to be renovated. Its advantages and responsibilities in this work have been but vaguely comprehended, because not more attentively considered. So we say, think about it—read about it—talk about it. Find out what it is. If it is Christian teaching, and the early thorough training of character for life and immortality, then look at it until you have some just conception of its supreme dignity, importance, and obligation. In order to this, look at it in the light of God's truth, taking in the whole range of the soul's existence through time and eternity.

Such thought will correct the prevalent mis-

apprehension and depreciation of the home work, awaken new and deeper interest, lead to further inquiry, and prepare the way for its better performance. Just views, deep convictions, aroused feeling are necessary to efficient action; and they all proceed from earnest thought.

2. STUDY ITS MATERIAL. This is human nature in each separate specimen, as found in the home from the child upward—the mysterious composite being so unlike the material of all other work. It is mind with its common resemblances and individual peculiarities. But it is mind dwelling in, and affected by, bodies fearfully and wonderfully made, and so marked by peculiarities of constitution and temperament that every case presents a distinct and separate problem. On this living immortal mind in its present actual individual conditions the home work is wrought for weal or woe. Here, then, is our subject of study.

Without some knowledge of it how shall we—how dare we—proceed with the work? In order to success every-where else, thorough acquaintance with the material operated upon is indispensable. Is it less so here? Is it less necessary for us in the treatment of mind than for the workers in brass, or iron, or clay? Ignorance of that with which we deal is often

fatal, even though it be accompanied with the best intentions and endeavors. It is sufficient explanation of the sad and otherwise unaccountable failures observed in so many homes. No tender interest or prayerful anxiety for loved ones can dispense with the necessity of an intelligent adaptation of effort to their peculiar individual requirements.

3. LEARN HOW TO DO IT. No work in the world requires studied effort and practiced skill more than this; and none receives so little, not even bread-making, or cooking a dinner. For the latter, the manuals provided in such cases must be consulted, and the experiments must be carefully conducted under competent direction, until in due time the art is acquired. For enterprising workers of every kind, books and journals are published, associations are formed, and conventions are held to aid in determining the best possible method of doing their respective work. Every handicraft involving skill requires an apprenticeship, and every profession its school of preparatory training. The age demands skilled labor, and gives the first place to the practical question of means and methods. Indeed, this question must be considered in the very least and most simple work; how much more, then, in the greatest and most difficult of all.

The work upon character in the home is continually going on by some method, and of some kind, right or wrong; and it is sure to be followed by corresponding results of success or failure. Is not success more important here than elsewhere? If it depends under God upon the means and methods employed, let us have the very best that can be found. Let us learn from the experiments of others. Many utterly fail, while some have wonderful success. Why the difference? Ascertain by careful inquiry. Attend teachers' institutes of every kind. Parents need their instruction and drill quite as much as any other teachers. Obtain help from every open source. Especially study the work in all its details while doing it, and if possible acquire perfect mastery of the great art of teaching.

4. TAKE TIME FOR IT. Do not suffer the minor duties of the household, or the cares of business, to rob the home of its own peculiar work—its highest glory and most sacred privilege. Such robbery is a crime before God and man, and will surely be visited with untold calamity. Duty, like charity and every other good, begins at home. Neglect other interests, if need be, for this. Let the work of mutual improvement have a special allotment of time. Give it a

prominent place in the programme of life, and make all other things tributary to it.

And wait not for more favorable circumstances. Now is the accepted time. God gives it for this very purpose, and has appointed bounds that we can not pass. Sickness and death come to the home, and can not be postponed or evaded on account of business. And even though life be protracted to its utmost limits, the home circle will soon be broken up. Our loved ones are going from us out into the great world, to encounter its temptations, and undergo the severest tests of character. What is done must be done quickly. The time for the home work is passing, and will soon be gone forever. Seize it, then, if it be only in fragments. Use it now, while you may, for the work whose results shall outlast all time.

5. BE WHAT IT REQUIRES. This last, but not least—this above all the rest. Whether the preceding hints are observed or not, in any case what we are told the story—it has more to do than all besides.

The greatest moral force in the world is that of real character; and nowhere is it greater than in the home. Here it obtains full scope by the freedom from restraint and the intimacy of constant association peculiar to the home life, and

is manifested by the consequent powerful tendency to mutual assimilation. Its subtle influence penetrates all disguises, and exposes all hypocrisies. It even counteracts, if it does not confirm, both precept and example. Whatever our professions, counsels, or external deportment, we are known in the home if nowhere else for what we are—known as by a sort of intuition by even the younger children.

This influence of character emanates from, and operates upon, every one of the circle, the stern strong man and the innocent little one on his knee, the ever-present mother and the visitor of a day. It is a kind of atmosphere, in which all live, and move, and have their being. However hidden and mysterious the process may be, the effects are palpable, unmistakable, and always in keeping with their causes. In this, as in every thing else, like begets like. Thus, silently, perhaps unconsciously, and yet steadily and decisively are we doing our home work.

May God help us to be what he requires for a place in his own family below and above—*like Christ*.

XXXII.

TRUE VALUE OF AMUSEMENTS.

THE subject is of too great extent and importance for adequate treatment in a brief chapter. We therefore offer only a few words with the hope of at least suggesting an answer to some of the perplexing questions which naturally arise in every one's life, and are frequently referred for a safe decision to Christian parents and teachers.

It will not do in this case to accept the maxim that "a thing is worth what it will bring." Some regard must be had to intrinsic excellence and adaptation to a good and useful purpose.

It is precisely at this point that the great mistake occurs. Amusements are treated as a commodity, and their popular valuation is determined, in no small degree, by the "prices current." The market, where the prices are fixed, is a speculative one, ruled by the clamorous demands of fashion, caprice, and lust. In their joint and several interests factitious values are assigned to the articles in trade, and imposed upon the world as

“quotations of the market,” and therefore reliable. Like certain “fancy stocks,” the things in question may command a high premium, and be eagerly sought for even at the risk of fame and fortune, peace and purity, honor and heaven. Judged by the standard of the price so often paid, they might be deemed of wondrous worth; but they can deceive only the unsuspecting and thoughtless. Really, they are dissipations and follies under the false and specious guise of amusements—the worst and most miserable of cheats. They are valuable only in the service of Satan, where they lure to destruction by the attractions offered in the excitement and gratification of depraved tastes.

In view of this assumed monopoly and utter perversion of amusement, so called, it is not strange that the sober-minded should come to look with suspicion upon every thing bearing the name. But, however public opinion may be imposed upon in the matter, there are, after all, simple, genuine, wholesome amusements, for which the title should be claimed exclusively in the interests of the true, the right, and the good. Like the innocent sports of childhood, they command no exorbitant price, and may never come into market at all; but they are within easy reach of all who need them, and form a part of God's

great bounty for the wealth of the world. It is the part of wisdom, then, to discriminate between the false and the true, and to accept what God gives at its proper value—that which he has assigned.

To determine this value is not difficult when once the question is brought within the domain of reason and conscience in the sight of God. Its standard is found, not in the popular demand or the market price, but in the gift itself, its nature and purpose, or obvious adaptation to our real wants.

Without doubt, in some measure amusements are necessary for all, in every period and condition of life, in order to perfect soundness, vigor, and elasticity of both body and mind. This necessity seems to be founded upon a well-known law of our nature; namely, that no mental or physical tension, whether occasioned by active effort or passive endurance, can be uninterruptedly maintained for any great length of time without injury more or less serious. Some relaxation is indispensable. It is obtained in profound sleep, God's beneficent provision for this very end. But restful, refreshing sleep is not always possible when needed the most. Something more is often required for the full reinvigoration of overtasked nerves. This is amuse-

ment, consisting essentially in the relief of tension by an exhilarating change of employment. Sometimes the mere change is sufficient for the purpose; but ordinarily it must be from a previous employment to one which is not only different, but easy and delightful, diverting the whole current of thought, and exhilarating without exhausting. Such, we may safely conclude, is the divinely authorized method of relief.

If genuine amusements are of this nature, and have this effect, their value in promoting our entire well-being can hardly be overrated, and their proper use is clearly indicated.

Of course, they can never be made an exclusive business, nor in the intervals of business be carried to the point of exhaustion, without losing their distinctive character. And they have no peculiar purpose to serve in behalf of the indolent. They rightfully belong to the busy, toiling millions, who pause to gather new strength amid the responsibilities and work of life, or sink weary and broken by their burdens. Accordingly they are employed with success as a restorative agent in the treatment of the insane, and for many others constitute the best preventive of insanity. When duly regulated, they quicken the development of childhood, preserve and perpetuate the vigor of maturity, check the advances of decrepi-

tude and old age, and tend to alleviate in some degree the burden, strain, and agony of life at every period. In a world of toil and pain they are of priceless value, and become the humble ally of religion itself. They should, therefore, be provided in ample measure for every home, and have an honored place at the side of all work.

But, to prevent deterioration and to secure their highest benefits, the most careful attention must be paid to their due regulation. And this is to be accomplished chiefly by *regulating the heart*. Failure at this point is the beginning of all trouble and evil, and satisfactorily accounts for the difficulty experienced in attempting to purify and elevate the world's recreations. When we take delight only in what is true and right, pure and good, when our tastes and desires are simple, unperturbed, and regulated by love to God and man, we adjust with equal ease and safety our labors and our amusements. A heart in which Christ reigns supreme in light and love is a wonderfully effective test in all such matters, and we would have little hesitation in submitting every case to its decision.

But if any formal rule is required, it may be this: Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind that the amusement in question is

productive of no evil or injury of any kind or degree to himself or others, and has at least the positive good of a pleasant relaxation from toil.

Thus prepared for amusements, we shall find innumerable resources at our command, and shall never be betrayed into a false acknowledgment of our poverty by going upon forbidden ground in quest of the doubtful or wrong.

XXXIII.

THE BEST INVESTMENT.

I N this country nearly every body is more or less concerned in making investments, for the reason that nearly every body has something to invest. Conditions here are so favorable to honest industry that in ordinary times something can generally be saved over and above the expenses of a frugal support. The amount in any one case may at first be small in itself; but it is relatively great, being all, and is likely to awaken more concern respecting its proper disposal than a much larger sum at another time.

That small savings, as well as large surplus capital, require suitable investment, is evident from the remarkable number and prosperity of the savings-banks throughout the country, their immense funds being the gradual accumulation of very small deposits. These are banks for the people—for “the million” rather than the millionaire. When the Government loans were at different times thrown upon the market, they were taken up by all classes of people, and in

bonds of all denominations from ten thousand dollars down to fifty. The fifty-dollar bond was a wise recognition of the popular demand.

Besides these personal savings from the regular proceeds of business, we must also take into account the vast amount of funds held in trust for various purposes, as by guardians for minor heirs, and by financial boards for the benefit of colleges, hospitals, and other chartered institutions. All such funds are put in trust for investment in behalf of their beneficiaries, who are numerous and dependent; and any person worthy of being a trustee is likely to feel even a greater responsibility than if only his own private interests were involved. Thus, in one way or another, the question of investments becomes a matter of almost universal concern.

Hoarding being out of the question,—since it is in every respect a “bad business,” a sort of hiding of one’s talents in a napkin,—and the making of an investment having been resolved upon, the first thing to be determined is its kind or form, and then its place; and there are many from which to choose. Shall it be in bank deposits, in dividend-paying stocks, in bonds or promissory notes bearing interest, in productive real estate, in the operations of business—or in something different from all these?

To effect the choice, and complete the work wisely and well, is often no easy task, especially in periods of financial excitement or disturbance. At any time the circumstances of the case need to be very carefully considered, such as the purposes to be served, the different advantages offered, and a variety of incidental details. An important consideration in many cases is permanence, to avoid the trouble of frequent reinvestments, and also promptness of payments, to prevent annoying disappointments. Two things are indispensable, for obvious reasons; namely, productiveness, and security against depreciation and loss. Of course, the object is profit in money—generally, though not always. As an object it is entirely legitimate; and the practice of making investments with that in view should be encouraged, especially with the young, and with people of moderate means. But, granting all this, the question still remains whether there is not something else possibly better.

A young man—a boy he would once have been called—comes to the forks of the road, and must choose his future course. Shall he go immediately into business, or to college? Shall he acquire a liberal education, or an early fortune? He has both time and money—rather more of the former than the latter—for either investment.

It is a matter of grave deliberation; but, with the aid of a little friendly counsel, it is happily decided, and he goes to college. His young friend, of about the same age, circumstances, and natural capacity, chooses the opposite course. The one makes his first principal investment in self-culture, the other in the operations of business. Both are of good moral character, and prosper in their undertakings.

At the end of twenty years we may compare the profits realized. In personal influence and usefulness, and perhaps in social position, the early student is now the recognized superior, by virtue of his greater knowledge and culture. In respect to personal happiness, also, it may be supposed that he has the advantage of his former friend; for he has additional and higher sources of enjoyment. As to property, he has nearly made up for the time apparently lost at the beginning; at any rate, he has enough for all practical purposes, and the ability to get more. Has he any reason for regret? Not at all, he thinks, but rather for abundant satisfaction and rejoicing. He chose a good part, which shall never be taken away from him. *He invested in himself*, and his investment has every desirable quality,—permanence, promptness of returns, the richest productiveness, and safety forever

assured, We commend his choice to all in like circumstances.

Children, however, are not always allowed to choose freely for themselves, as in the case just supposed. During the more profitable part of their minority both time and money may be claimed by the father; and earlier in life they are necessarily subject to his direction. In any case, therefore, the question comes up for parental concurrence or decision.

What, then, is the best investment the father can make for the sons and daughters still under his care? Is it merely or mainly in property, to be hereafter inherited, and perhaps lost? or, rather, in the current expenses of the best possible education of head and heart and hands, placing their fortunes in themselves? If there is no money for such expenses, and every effort is required to keep the wolf from the door, even then the question may be considered; for circumstances often change, and in the very pinchings of poverty the best investment is not altogether impossible.

Happily, it is not money alone that secures the desired culture. From the humblest abodes of loving toil and intelligent care many a boy has gone forth rich in all the elements of a noble Christian manhood, and bearing the tenderest

memories of him or her who nourished their earliest development. Nothing is so effective in deciding the future man as the moral atmosphere of parental influence, the reigning ideas and spirit of the early home. If these are of the highest Christian type, they insure all possible aid from the use of money as it is acquired, and the appropriation of time also, even if it must be wrung from the exactions of business.

It is well indeed that time and money may be invested in the due preparation of young immortals for their future responsibilities. The prosperous man of business, who devotes its principal profits to the attractions of his home and the best education of his children, may not be able to accumulate property like some of his neighbors, who sacrifice every thing to accumulation; but in all sober judgment he does what is infinitely better,—performs his duty as a father, gains for himself a more affluent life, and leaves at his death an enduring and priceless patrimony.

But the question proposed is one of very general concern in all the relations of life and its general consideration is especially appropriate at a time when investments of every kind are undergoing the severest tests. The instability of riches and the risks of business are perhaps no greater now than heretofore, but they are having

some very striking illustrations when the best securities become unavailable, and the largest accumulation of assets affords no protection against embarrassment and loss. Besides, the recent general prosperity of the country has developed an unusual tendency, not only to speculation and extravagance, but to an exaggerated estimate of the value of property, and a comparative depreciation of mere personal worth. This tendency has been signally checked and rebuked by the appearance of its inevitable results. With almost daily reports of defalcations, embezzlements, and startling corruption in places of responsibility and trust, genuine character is likely to be better appreciated, both in its intrinsic superiority to property and in its commercial importance as a necessary condition of the safety of property.

If we are able to read the great lesson of the times, it is, *Sterling wealth of personal character the first and the best investment.*

XXXIV.

ACTION AND COUNTERACTION.

ONLY two words—action and counteraction—but they epitomize history, condense prophecy, and represent the world. They express the great practical antithesis of every age, the fact of conflict in all human life. Perhaps the single word counteraction would be sufficient, since it implies both action and conflict. But the thing signified is the matter of importance.

Counteraction has an origin and history quite in keeping with its true character. It began in Eden when Satan withstood the Almighty, and, succeeding in part through the defection of the first pair, it thenceforward made the earth its arena, and left its traces in the very soil which it cursed. Under the same leadership it is still continued against every good work with infinite woe to the world. Finding abundant support among men, it combines the service of all evil to resist all good with a persistency which only the devil can inspire. Not content with merely negative results, it has evil seed of its own to sow,

but meantime loses no opportunity of catching away or destroying the good, and freely employs any method adapted to its purpose.

But, whatever the form assumed, it is directed principally against the truth of God, as at the Beginning, and is in itself every-where and always a lie, begotten by the father of lies. Since the bruising of the serpent's head, counteraction concentrates all its malignity and power upon "the truth as it is in Jesus." To defeat the communication and influence of the truth that saves is now the one great object in view.

On this issue the struggle proceeds between action and counteraction, and is carried into the life of every human being.

It begins in childhood or with the first communication of truth, at the very beginning of the influence of truth upon the heart and the will. The attitude voluntarily taken and maintained then or at any subsequent period definitely settles the question in every case. It must be either acquiescence or resistance. To receive and cherish the truth, to give it root in the affections, growth in the character, and fruit in the life, is the highest order of action. To do otherwise at any point is to become a party to counteraction. The struggle goes on until the soul becomes "good ground," or is given over to a state of utter

hardness, sterility, and thorns. Each individual must decide for himself the issue which involves his own character, action, and destiny.

But in this struggle and final decision Christian parents and teachers and all who can exert any influence for the truth are parties deeply interested. They hold the truth for the very purpose of dissemination, and may even do something toward the preparation of the soil for its reception. But in all its variety of condition the field is before them awaiting tillage. The labor doubtless is arduous; but is not duty plain?

When the "sower went forth to sow," it was not to feed the birds, to clothe with temporary verdure the stony places, nor to compete with thorns. Through the successive stages of germination, growth, and maturity he saw only the future harvest. Was he successful? "Some seed fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold." So far there was success; for the rest failure came by counteraction. Did not the "hundred fold" warrant the sowing? Did not success justify action notwithstanding partial failure? Must all action cease because of possible or probable counteraction? How, then, shall a harvest ever be reaped?

So the "sower went forth to sow," and in like manner every sower since has sowed. The seeds

are devoured by the fowls of the air; the growth of early promise is scorched and withers away; the ripening grain is choked by luxuriant thorns; at every stage the work is beset with difficulties; but the sower reaps at last. Action steadily pursued, with the end in view, through all counteraction gains its final reward in the joy of the harvest.

In the feebleness of human effort it is well to know that the Word of God is *seed* as well as nutriment; that it has life in itself inclosing the possibilities of a future harvest, and is therefore capable of taking on action of its own, succeeding that of the sower. The simple act of teaching, so liable to be counteracted by adverse influences, may in given conditions be supplemented by action of a higher order, which shall insure success. "God giveth the increase."

There is certainly encouragement in this; but there is responsibility also. The increase is contingent upon the sowing, whether the ground be good or bad. Uncommunicated truth is powerless, like the seed in the garner. Its possibilities of germination and growth are held in check at the very beginning, in advance of all liabilities from the fowls of the air or the rocks and thorns of the field. Inaction on the part of appointed teachers is counteraction in its worst form, leav-

ing not a single chance for the harvest. It at once arrests the purpose, and prevents the blessing of Him who gave the truth to be communicated amid all the exposures incident to such a field as the world, with the accompanying promise that if sent forth upon its mission his "word should not return unto Him void."

Action, then, is necessary. Nothing can be hoped for without it. The work must go on despite the difficulties and hinderances actively or passively interposed. The good seed must be scattered over the whole field with a lavish hand. The "word of the kingdom" must be taught in the family, the Sunday-school, the pulpit, everywhere, with mingled hope and fear, but with such carefulness of skill and profusion of effort as to reduce to the lowest point the liability of failure. No alternative is left but action overwhelming counteraction, the patient continuance of toil far and wide from the early morning unto the latest evening.

For the very reason that some of the seed may be caught away or fail to reach its perfect fruit, scatter it with the more liberal hand, and bestow upon it the more careful culture, "always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

XXXV.

BRIDGE THE CHASMS!

DOES any one ask, what chasms? Those which hold aloof one human being from another—the old from the young, the rich from the poor, the wise from the foolish, the good from the bad.

The natural differences of age, capacity, and circumstances in life; the moral differences of tastes and habits, of education and character; the conventional distinctions established by selfishness and pride—all these are, not of necessity but in effect, so many great gulfs of separation. Natural and moral differences among men certainly impose no necessity for keeping them asunder, and indeed constitute the very reason for bringing them together; but, instead of merely marking distinctions, they are allowed in many cases to prevent all near approach or friendly and beneficial intercourse.

And these chasms abound throughout society—separating individuals, families, Churches, communities, and nations. Often invisible and

perhaps unsuspected, they exist even between persons living together in the same household, or long associated in business. But whether seen and recognized or not, they are as numerous, varied, and real as the huge rents and fissures of the earth's surface. Perhaps they have the same, or a similar, origin in disturbing forces and internal convulsions. At any rate, they are stubborn facts, and must be treated accordingly.

But what can be done? Just what has been done in thousands of analogous cases. Close up the chasms, or at least throw over bridges. By some means bring mind into contact with mind upon terms of mutual sympathy and confidence.

Is this impossible? Civil engineering has encountered its greatest difficulties, and won its grandest triumphs in opening free intercommunication over the earth's surface. Bridges for thought, bridges for commerce, bridges for the world's living freight span the mountain gorges and even the deep chasms of the ocean. Secular enterprise finds its way every-where, despite the most formidable obstructions. Shall moral engineering fall behind the age, and exhibit less of skill and success? It is not a question of utilizing the forces and materials of nature under the direction of natural science, but it is equally

within the scope of human genius and energy guided by divine wisdom. Moral forces and appliances are certainly subject to the power of Him who ordained them, and are therefore at the command of men when engaged in his service and doing his bidding. If necessary to the accomplishment of his will it is fully within our ability to bridge the chasms.

And this is just what is most imperatively demanded for the welfare of the race. So long as restrictions are laid upon the commerce of truth and the free intercourse of minds and hearts between different classes of mankind, so long will the true riches remain undistributed to the serious loss and injury of all concerned. In fact, these chasms are unmitigated evils, and require prompt remedy. They arrest the very process by which the richest gift of heaven, the bread of life, is conveyed to perishing souls. They interpose the most effectual barriers to the progress of the Gospel; and, unless they are surmounted, human agency will be of little avail for the salvation of the world.

In heathen countries the missionary encounters at every point a system of caste which relentlessly divides the entire population by numerous chasms so deep and wide as to be quite impassable. Across these he and his helpers must

deliver their message under the greatest disadvantages, and with very limited success, until the system is abolished or bridges are built.

The home missionary in our great cities finds vast numbers of outcasts, almost inaccessible by reason of the distrust and hopelessness incident to their social condition; and, if he succeeds at all, it is only by passing the gulf, and going among them as a brother.

Among the more intelligent and virtuous portions of society a vast amount of labor is lost by never reaching its proper objects. Multitudes of respectable people never attend Church, even where the sermons are eloquent and the accommodations spacious, on account of some intervening chasm. They are never reached in their homes or places of business by suitable Christian effort, and spend the whole of life under the influence of misapprehensions and prejudices which might have been corrected by simply crossing a bridge.

Many of the best and ablest ministers exert only a tithe of their proper and possible influence, because of professional isolation, and the difficulty of intimate association and acquaintance. From the pulpit and in society they hold communication with the people from a distance over an unbridged chasm.

Large bodies of Christians, constituting evangelical Churches, are as widely separated as lofty mountain peaks—touching only at their base.

Families, living in the larger towns, know and care as little for their next door neighbors as if they were their antipodes.

Even among members of the same family there is often little of hearty sympathy and mutual understanding and fellowship. Especially is this the case between parents and children—a cold unsympathetic reserve on the one side, distrust and deceit on the other, and all mutual influence for good lost in the chasm.

In the Sunday-school, also, teachers have little power because of the unbridged space between them and childhood—many of them never really reaching the hearts of their pupils.

The great lack every-where is nearness of approach, some means of connection—a bridge for the chasm.

How to supply the lack we may learn from Him, whose love spanned the awful chasm opened by the rebellion of his creatures, who himself passed the infinite distance and went about doing good—the “friend of publicans and sinners.”

XXXVI.

PERFECT COMMUNITY.

THE primary meaning of terms in common use is often exceedingly suggestive. Thus, common, communicate, communion, and community are branches of the same stock, and have a common root in words which signify *ready to be of service together*. As the branches are penetrated and rendered fruitful by sap from the roots, so the things signified by these terms derive their very life from readiness for mutual service.

Without this spirit little can be possessed or enjoyed in common, communication and communion are kept within the narrowest limits, and no real community can ever exist. This is the distinguishing and vital element of true civilization, in the progress of which it gradually becomes a controlling force, and by its own spontaneous action secures the general welfare. Because so many of the people are not ready to be of service together, the enforcement of law is necessary for the promotion and defense of the

common interest, and the body politic, or society at large, is only a very imperfect form of community.

From the very nature of the case, the true idea of society can never be fully realized until human hearts are purged of the multiform selfishness, from which all disturbing and destructive forces proceed. In short, the spirit of mutual regard and service must become a pervading and controlling power in human life.

Happily for the world, the kingdom of God is a perfect community, specially adapted to the case.

With the Lord Jesus Christ as Head over all, it is formed of an innumerable company of angels in general assembly, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the Church of the first-born enrolled in heaven; but opening earthward it includes also the whole multitude of true believers, who are kept in training here for higher honors in the heavenly state. True to its essential character, it seeks continual enlargement, and proposes on certain conditions to absorb the entire race.

This community is none the less real because invisible in part; and though its rights, privileges, and interests may not be regarded as strictly civil, political, or ecclesiastical, they are

nevertheless of the highest order, and of transcendent value. In the very fact that they are spiritual consists their superior excellence.

Whatever is common to the members of this community belongs to the nature of rational and immortal spirits, and is derived to the souls of men through Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. By his intervention in our behalf the kingdom of heaven is opened below and above for the common possession and enjoyment of angels and men.

The terms of admission are in perfect keeping with its great purpose. They make no distinction between old and young, rich and poor, wise and simple. Consisting of personal surrender in filial penitence and loving trust, they are only such as the nature of the case requires, and come within easy reach of all alike.

Answering to these terms is the process of induction, which was fully exhibited as an example to the world, first in Jerusalem, and afterward at Cæsarea. When the Son of God had opened the way by the sacrifice of himself, and as Lord over his own house had resumed his throne on high, he bestowed the gift of power. As the Holy Spirit came from heaven the whole multitude of them that believed—embracing Jews and devout men out of every nation under

heaven—were of one heart and one soul. Their having all things common for a time, under the emergencies of the occasion, was the spontaneous product and proof of their common endowment by one Spirit. This process was repeated and duly authenticated when the centurion and other Gentiles received the same gift of the Holy Ghost. Then strangers and foreigners were made nigh by the blood of Christ.

The exact formula is given by the Hebrew of the Hebrews who went forth an apostle to all the people: “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” By such process of divine power all impediments to a perfect community were removed, and men of the most diverse character and culture were fully transformed and made partakers of a common life; and such is still the indispensable, and the only effective, method.

Although this community is called a kingdom, no kingdom of the nations can be taken as its type. It is constituted after the pattern of things in the heavens, and has no likeness on earth except that of the loving family, or the living body, in each of which all the members sustain vital relations to one head, and

have common interests, mutual sympathy, and a single aim.

So perfect is the community of this spiritual kingdom or family, that it is fitly represented as the very *body of Christ*.

Here He is supreme, the soul and life of all, communicating the blood current and the nerve power. He appoints the place and work of every member, bestows the more abundant honor upon that part which lacked, and so tempers all parts together that there should be no schism in the body. Thus the members have the same care one for another; and if one member suffers all the members suffer; or if one is honored all rejoice.

By the essential nature of this body love is both law and life—the law of liberty, and the life of joyful obedience. And all who are thus joined to Christ, without losing their distinctive individuality, are animated by one common impulse to be of service together, and enter into a perfect community of thought, feeling, and labor.

This is the only true and right condition for human beings, as answering the purpose of Infinite Wisdom in their creation. It is the highest state possible—the “New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven.” It comprises

all the riches and glory which God himself can bestow, and yet it is freely opened to the whole world. All who enter and take possession learn, in the light of the Spirit and Word, the truth which no language can express. And not the least of their discoveries in this common inheritance of the saints is the great fact of the communion of kindred spirits, the mutual service of communication, and, between earth and heaven, God and man, a perfect community.

XXXVII.

“MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR.”

IT is a fact of no little interest that in the perfect community, briefly sketched in the preceding chapter, individuality attains its highest place and power.

It would be strange indeed were it otherwise. Every-where else throughout the universe grouping together brings out and distinguishes the individual, and nothing is ever perfectly complete except when in suitable relations to other things.

Thus the earth, if removed from its present place in the solar system, would lose at once its distinctive character. By a very slight change of its relations to the sun it would be rendered wholly unfit for the habitation of man, and become quite another kind of planet.

So also in the human body numerous distinct organs are brought together, no one of which would be the same out of its appointed place. Pluck out the eye, and it is an eye no longer. Cut off the hand, and, though it were preserved from all other changes, it ceases to be a hand.

The foot and the hand are distinguished by individual differences not merely of structure, but much more of position and use in the body, and the same is true of all the different members. Every part is valuable and necessary by virtue of the purpose it serves in behalf of the whole—the foot because it is a foot, the hand by being a hand, the eye by seeing, and the ear by hearing.

“The eye can not say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members, *every one of them*, in the body as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.”

Thus perfect community not only requires, but actually secures perfect individuality.

Such is the fundamental law of the universe, the order which God himself has established; and nowhere is it more imperative or effectual than in the great spiritual community addressed in the words, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members *in particular*.” As a test of condition and a rule of action it has for all men the authority and value of an infallible standard. It

is, in fact, the one great law of individual development and usefulness, according to which every one must find his true place and perform his own part in absolute subjection to the supreme Head, and in perfect concord with all the parts. Every one doing this contributes the largest possible amount to the common welfare, and at the same time promotes in the highest degree his own happiness and growth.

But this consummation is reached only in “the body of Christ,” for the sufficient reason that it is the only perfect community. Here all living and true members occupy their respective places by divine appointment, and, while forming one body, have the noblest aim and the widest scope for the exercise of all their individual powers. The body itself liberates, exalts, nourishes, and employs “in particular” the members of which it is composed. By its very constitution as the work of God, and of all his works the nearest to himself, it is the most perfect illustration of the law that the individual secures the largest freedom and development by devotion to the greatest good of the community and the glory of the Lord of all.

Opposed to all this is the spirit of selfishness, which seeks gratification at any expense. It is essentially incompatible with community, and con-

tinually tends to the subversion alike of corporate rights and of individual interests. In direct conflict with God and his law, it necessarily defeats its own purpose, narrows the life, cramps the soul, and is the very essence of sin.

Of course, then, selfishness is wholly foreign to the body of Christ, in the very formation of which it yields to the spirit of comprehensive benevolence. Whenever it reappears, as is sometimes the case, it must be regarded as a local affection of members in particular, a disease incident to their individual imperfection, and attributable to loss of vitality. It may take the form of murmurings, envyings, ambition of place, arrogance of superiority, and the like; but it is always the same, and is absolutely fatal to membership. It consigns the part affected to a withered condition in formal connection with the body, or to the rottenness of total separation. Particular exemption from an evil so deadly in its effects is secured by maintaining a living connection with the Head and habitual activity in the common service. Thus, by the operation of the organic law of the body of Christ, every thing is excluded which can impair the health and vigor of members in particular. In short, the Holy Spirit, which animates the community, also imparts life and power to the individual.

In a body thus constituted the place assigned to any member in particular must be the highest and best for such member. Otherwise less wisdom is displayed here than in the inferior physical organization. “If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?” The one is needed quite as much as the other. And how would the foot, by change of place, serve the purpose of the hand? So in the body of Christ every real member has just the right place, if it be true that “from him the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, and according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Nothing is so unreasonable and schismatic as dissatisfaction with the divine appointment. The only question for the member is that of the best possible service, with implicit trust in the wisdom which determines the kind. Whatever the place may be, if within the body it is enough. Here it has a work in particular, the effectual doing of which is necessary to the common edification. And no part is so humble or obscure as to be left without care, love, and honor from the Head. If uncomely and unseen, like the

vital physical organs, they are even more necessary than the most conspicuous; and though seeming to be less honorable, they receive the more abundant honor. It is the work well done, rather than the place in which it is done, that secures present approval and final reward.

Now if the body is not one member, but many members with particular differences, then the individuality of such members is absolutely indispensable and must be preserved. It must be cultivated and called into place and power. The sound Scriptural philosophy of increase consists in securing a full supply and an effectual working according to the measure of every part. Individual development is corporate growth, and difference of the parts is completeness of the whole. The peculiar endowments and functions of any member are benefits for the entire body.

Let no man, therefore, either despise or covet another's gifts. Let no one expect his own work to be done by others or insist that they shall be altogether like himself. No one should ever take another as a standard of self-measurement, or regard his own peculiarities and labors as being without purpose and value. Every one should be fully himself by having the Spirit of Christ, and make the most of his own abilities by using them all in the work of Christ.

XXXVIII.

VARIETY IN UNITY OF WORK.

“**E** PLURIBUS UNUM” is infinitely more than a grand national motto, condensing the philosophy of free institutions, and rendered doubly sacred by the cost of its maintenance and the history of its benefits. It belongs to the seal of God himself, and is stamped upon all the works of his hand.

The universe throughout its vast variety of countless worlds is constituted one by an all-pervading presence and power. On our own small planet

“The earth, the ocean, and the sky,
To form one world agree;
Where all that walk, or swim, or fly,
Compose one family.”

From apparently incongruous elements and numerous different parts man himself is formed, and is conscious of the unity of his being. He has been styled “the universe in miniature,” an epitomized *Cosmos*, because in his organization the materials are collected from widely varied

sources and combined in wonderful order and harmony.

For the same reason the perfect human body, made one by the indwelling soul, is used as a fitting symbol of the perfect spiritual community called "the body of Christ." In this, the greatest work of God, the impress of the seal is most conspicuous. Here, as we have seen in former chapters, the one is composed of the many; unity is formed out of variety; and difference of the parts is completeness of the whole.

Now it can not for a moment be supposed that such a body is left in a world like this without full and appropriate employment. Indeed, the most important fact, next to its organization, is the work for which it is designed.

The Lord Jesus declared in the days of his incarnation, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Having devoted to the work of sacrifice and mediation the single human body prepared for that purpose, he provided another to serve in the propagation of the knowledge and benefits of his mission through all the world. For this purpose he gave the promise of the Spirit, and pronounced in the most impressive manner the words of the great commission.

After his ascension these provisions were carried into full effect. By the baptism of the Holy

Ghost, Christ reappeared in the rapidly increasing multitude of true believers, became their very life, appropriated to his own use all their varied powers, and thus constituted for himself one vast body, admirably adapted to the work which still remained to be done. This new body, so full of life and activity at the first, has since been perpetuated and enlarged, until now it lives by its multiplied members on every continent and island of the globe, having every-where the one supreme Head, and under his direction the same unfinished work.

The unity of this work is assured by the singleness of the divine purpose. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." He lived, and died, and lives again at the right hand of the Majesty on high and in all his members here below, with only one object in view—the greatest possible good to all men by their return to God.

If he really sustains a relation to believers the same with that of the soul to the body, then he certainly moves them all by one common impulse in the expression of his will, and directs their actual labors to the accomplishment of his cherished purpose. That must be a very imperfect body, and hardly worthy of the name, in which the soul has no power of manifestation and con-

trol. According to the true order the body exists for the soul, and not the soul for the body. So the body of Christ is of him and for him; and, while it remains such, it can never have a separate life nor a divided aim. Thus with one perfect body of living workers, animated by one controlling spirit and purpose, the work itself must be one.

But just at this point arises a question which is of great practical interest. If all true Christians, as members of the body of Christ, must be engaged in this one work, how can they continue in their different providential callings? Or, can it be said that some are members really, and others only constructively—like a crutch or an eye-glass, to be used occasionally? It is clear from the authorized analogy of physical life, that all the work of every true member must be in the body, and for him to whom it belongs. But, with the actual and necessary diversities both of gifts and of occupation, how is this possible?

With a little careful thought the true answer is furnished. "All the members have not the same office." *E pluribus unum* is stamped not only upon the body itself, but also upon all its proper work; and the one corresponds exactly to the other. As the single body is necessarily

composed of many members, so the variety of their work is indispensable to complete unity in the effect.

For the success of almost any ordinary work, the person undertaking it must use to a greater or less extent all his powers, mental and physical. And how greatly is the result impaired by imperfect performance in the functions of any part. Disable the hand, or the foot, or one of the organs of sense, and the loss is felt at once; touch the vital parts, and the work is arrested altogether. So also is the work of Christ. "For there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all."

The practical recognition of this truth is of the utmost importance. It can not fail to correct some grievous mistakes, and to promote in many ways the harmony and efficiency of all good work. No effort is rendered unnecessary by being indirect. The main and direct operations depend upon countless auxiliaries acting in concert, and contributing each of its own kind a full quota to the common enterprise. The Gospel must be preached by men set apart to that work; but the preacher must be sent and sup-

ported; and support means money, in part at least; and money requires labor of many kinds—all of which may be performed for Christ. The Gospel must be preached every-where to every body by every possible method; and this furnishes employment to all alike, in the family, the Sunday-school, the associations of business, and in all the varied circumstances of life.

But the variety of work can be measured only by the variety of gifts, opportunities, and necessities. Every individual has something to do which can be done by no other; and however small the work may seem it forms an essential part of the grand unit of success. Let all, therefore, do what they can just where they are, and rejoice that in Christ Jesus there is the largest variety in perfect unity of work.

XXXIX.

CO-OPERATION FOR CHRIST.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE SAME END—
this, in brief, is co-operation.

It is readily distinguished from the fanciful union which is sometimes advocated. Co-operation presupposes separate and distinct agencies, operating either as individuals or as organizations, and makes no demand for an impracticable denominational unity. It is entirely consistent with great diversity in the methods of operation, and derives from such diversity a decided advantage—as is well illustrated by the different arms of the military service and the various organs of the human body. It allows wide differences of opinion on all questions not fundamental to the work, and is possible even where the laborers are separated by distance of both time and place. It demands, however, as absolutely indispensable, the removal of all mutual jealousies and antagonisms, and the concentration of effort upon one and the same end. It is working together with the largest freedom of action, and,

in many cases, without actual combination of forces, but always and every-where with the same object in view. It implies the only union which is possible or desirable for the great body of workers, an all-comprehensive oneness in Christ Jesus—the unity of the Spirit in co-operative love and labor.

In secular affairs, co-operation, under certain limitations, is undergoing the test of successful experiment, and is rapidly becoming the order of the day. Co-operative societies are formed for the management of various mercantile and manufacturing interests, and with such manifest advantage that multitudes resort to them for protection against the rapacity of extortioners. In fact, the whole business enterprise of the world is sound and healthful—contributing to individual profit and the common welfare—only when it is conducted on the basis of general co-operation.

Such is the law of labor where merely material results are sought, and its observance is justly made a point of the greatest importance. Disaster invariably follows neglect, and can be repaired only by returning to fundamental principles. Special effort is, therefore, made to guard against all conflict between the different branches of labor and trade, and to maintain a

wise adjustment and harmonious working of the entire machinery of business. This is worldly wisdom securing its end, worldly prosperity; and the secret of success is co-operation.

Shall the children of this world always be wiser in their generation than the children of light? Shall the law of effective labor be disregarded only in its highest department? Shall the desire for temporal good prove a mightier regulating force than love for Christ and the souls of men? However important co-operation may be as a matter of mere temporal economy and success, it is certainly far more so in all Christian enterprises. Here it might be expected to encounter less difficulty and find greater facilities than elsewhere, and to exhibit in advance of the age its beneficent results.

Co-operation for Christ should be already an accomplished fact on the grandest scale. It is practicable without material change of ecclesiastical organizations, methods, or creeds—requiring only the Spirit and aims of the Gospel. It is desirable for the sake of the immense interests involved, and by every reason which can move the Christian heart. It is rendered necessary by the extent of the field, the character of the opposition, and the very nature of the work itself. It is indeed the great leading idea of the

Gospel plan of labor—the order established by supreme authority.

Actual service is required of all Christians; and, however numerous its branches, it is essentially the same throughout, having the inspiration of a single commanding purpose, and tending to one grand final result. God has exalted human agency to the dignity of co-operation with himself in the instruction and salvation of the race, and most certainly requires all his agents on their part to work together for the same end. The manner of work thus becomes quite as much a duty as work itself; and faithfulness to Christ consists in universal and hearty co-operation in his service.

Now, however strange it may appear, it is just at this point that we find the most serious failure. It is a failure not so much of effort as of method. A vast amount of labor is expended; but with very inadequate results, because of the general neglect of this great duty of co-operation.

Of the different Christian Churches, not a few seem to regard themselves as having each an exclusive commission to convert the world, and to look upon every other as an intruder barely to be tolerated. Such, at least, is the appearance caused by withholding from others all

sympathy and co-operation. Sometimes, indeed, the evil is carried much further—especially between Churches differing widely in polity, usages, or doctrines—when open animosity and actual conflict exhaust the strength of the contending parties, and incur the just reproach of the world. Such scenes are happily becoming rare; but ecclesiastical exclusiveness and sectarian jealousies to a great extent still remain to hinder the work of God.

Even among Churches of the same denomination, in some of our cities, the support of a separate establishment often appears to be the main object in view, and seriously interferes with every scheme of effective co-operation. The separate establishment, “our Church,” is supported in all due respectability, and perhaps some good is accomplished; but where is the moral power of concentrated masses, which is so frequently necessary to success?

So, at one point or another over the whole field, the organized labors of the Church suffer incalculable loss, simply through failure of earnest and general co-operation for Christ. Oh, for the inspiration and might of a single, exalted, and all-absorbing aim! How speedily would this effect the practical unity of the Church and the conversion of the world!

But the root of the difficulty will not be reached until co-operation for Christ is carried into the relations and work of individuals. This is the great duty and need of the hour—the co-operation of one with another wherever it is possible, in the home, in the Sunday-school, and between the two—the co-operation of the laity with the ministry, and of all the members among themselves, by watching over one another in love and working together continually for the same end. If concurrent effort increases individual power fivefold—if “one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight”—who can be excused from co-operation in the work of God?

Every disciple, even the humblest and most obscure, has a part to perform, which, however small in itself, may be of the utmost importance in the general plan. Here is the greatest liability of failure—here in fact is the failure—against which we are carefully guarded by the admonitions of the Scriptures. The foot can not say, Because I am not the hand I am not the body. The head can not say to the feet, I have no need of you. “Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” How perfect a model of co-operation is the human body, with its numerous and

different members? But "now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular;" and from him "the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part."

What more need we say? The divine ideal embodied in the very constitution of the Church, and the paramount duty of members in particular, is co-operation for Christ. Faithfulness in this will decide both the usefulness and the destiny of all our readers.

XL.

DISAPPEARANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

SOCIETY at the present day is to a great extent resolved into "societies." Organizations are formed for almost every conceivable purpose—good, bad, and indifferent—and seem to be capable of indefinite multiplication. Every trade has its league or union, every business enterprise of magnitude requires an incorporated company, and every interest of science, politics, and religion must be represented by a party or an association.

The story is told that some one in attempting to describe "the people called Methodists," solemnly declared that two of them never meet without taking a collection. It would be no greater exaggeration to say, as characteristic of Americans, that they never come together for even a temporary purpose without organizing the meeting by the appointment of a president, secretary, and at least one committee. Of course, a series of resolutions must be prepared, submitted, discussed, adopted, duly certified by the

proper officers, and published to the world. If the meeting fails to become a permanent society, it is only because it can be at any time conveniently reassembled. Just what the formidable resolutions actually accomplish it would be difficult to tell; but they express the "sense of the majority." Thus every body stands a chance of becoming a president sometime in his life; all are performing habitually the functions of legislators, and, to say the least, a natural instinct is gratified. Under the influence of our peculiar institutions, a powerful tendency is manifest to do every thing by organizations rather than by individuals.

Without doubt, many of these societies are useful, and some are indispensable. They grow out of the social nature and condition of the race, by virtue of which many worthy ends can be efficiently served only by a judicious combination of efforts. God himself has ordained the family, the Church, and the State as social organizations for specific purposes; and the precedent thus established may be safely followed.

But is not the tendency to organize already sufficiently developed? Does it not need now to be carefully guarded and directed rather than stimulated? It certainly is liable to serious perversion and abuse. A wondrously wise philoso-

phy assumes the plausible postulate that the individual dies while society lives forever, and thence concludes that the former is nothing, the latter every thing. But the assumption is as false as the system of philosophy which supports it; the individual never dies unless he is organized to death. It must be confessed, however, that with the prevalence of erroneous views and the favoring tendencies of the age, the individual is in real danger of being overwhelmed and absorbed by societies, and of becoming thus practically extinct.

This danger is most imminent in the affairs of politics and religion. In the former the individual surrenders himself to party and party measures without regard to his own independent convictions, and almost of necessity is subject to the dictation of party leaders, while these leaders themselves must carefully ascertain and follow the drift of majorities, whether in the right direction or the wrong. Even in the administration of ordinary charities the individual is superseded by committees of relief, and rarely enjoys the blessedness of giving directly to the objects of his benevolence. And what is more common than for individuals to be utterly lost from sight in so-called Christian organizations? The Church seems to be, in many instances, only a burying-

ground for unused talents, and the larger it is, the more convenient for the purpose. The Church record is of use chiefly as a cemetery directory, and carefully preserves the name, age, and date of burial, with perhaps an occasional epitaph inscribed by an affectionate pastor. For a wonder, you hear very similar names mentioned "on change" or see them displayed over places of trade, and at length make the astounding discovery that these same persons are fully alive to business enterprise, and are dead only to distinct personal Christian effort in the Church. In such cases the individual has quite disappeared in the organization.

This fact specially concerns the Church: How does it happen?

Of course, every one is ready to acknowledge that vast responsibilities rest upon the membership of the Church in the aggregate. "They, *they*" ought to do this or that, pay the preacher a better salary, repair the house of worship or relieve it of debt, sustain the Sunday-school, make the class and prayer meetings more interesting, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and convert sinners in masses. But though it is a member of the Church who thus complacently delivers his opinion, "they" can never by any possibility include himself. What, forsooth, is the object

of Church organization, unless it be to do these very things? And why join it if you must do them yourself?

Ridiculously absurd as all this appears, when once brought out "in black and white," it nevertheless represents the position actually taken in many cases. Thousands of nominal Christians are every day endeavoring to quiet conscience by gravely talking about the general duties and responsibilities of the Church, while they themselves do little or nothing of the required work. They cultivate a sort of *public* conscience, which serves the convenient purpose of excusing the individual and accusing the Church. Question such persons closely, and you find certain vague conceptions of an indefinable organization possessing in itself all needful power, and chargeable with all delinquencies. Tell them that the Church is composed of individuals, and they evasively reply, What is one among so many? Perhaps they quote the brilliant commonplace, "What is every body's business is nobody's." If the idea of distinct and separate responsibility is ever entertained, it rarely comes to be an appreciable force in the work of the Church.

If there were no exceptions to this statement, it is certain that nothing would ever be accomplished. In the most of cases a noble few en-

deavor to supply the deficiencies of the many, and succeed only in doing their own part. With their best efforts they can not take the place or do the work of others, but they save the Church from the disgrace of absolute uselessness. If all were as diligent as they, the value of every accession to the Church could be measured exactly by individual ability. Alas! that this is not the fact. It can not be concealed that the increase of power and usefulness is not in the ratio of the present rapid increase of membership. The vast and growing disproportion between the number of workers and of non-workers reveals all too plainly the lamentable disappearance of the individual.

Where the chief fault in this matter should be fixed remains a question to be decided according to the facts in particular cases. Certainly, no one can avoid at the last a strict account for whatever disposition he has made of his own talents. Personal responsibility is distinctly labeled "not transferable," and opportunities for usefulness may always be found somewhere if diligently sought. But, in the management of the affairs of the Church, is it not possible to prevent, or at least seriously obstruct, individual activity simply by neglecting to make suitable arrangements for it? May not the pastors and

chief men sometimes unwittingly invite and facilitate the burial rather than the active investment of individual talents?

What is the fact concerning the larger and "better half" of the Church? It is notorious that in many cases the lips of the most competent women are sealed, except in song, through false notions of modesty and the misinterpretation of an apostolic precept.

But what becomes of the multiplied thousands of men, women, and children who are annually added to the Church? If they are simply received, absorbed, and then lost from sight, is it altogether by their own fault? The question is specially appropriate in times of extensive revivals and large accessions, and the responsibility of the case is clear. Let every one, therefore, who has already come or is coming now, be heartily welcomed to all the activities of the Christian life, and furnished with every possible facility and encouragement. In short, let admission to membership in the Church be the epoch of the *emergence* instead of the disappearance of the individual.

XLI.

THE QUESTION OF POWER.

THE telegraph covers the land and fathoms the sea with lines of wire and cable, costing millions of money, and employing a host of operators. But what were all this without *electricity*? The whole system depends upon just this peculiar force, admitting of no known substitute; and if from any cause electricity could no longer be generated, the telegraph would at once become utterly useless.

Railroads, too, have multiplied to a marvelous extent, have absorbed a prodigious amount of capital, and are of incalculable utility, if not absolutely indispensable, to modern civilization. But what would be their value without the *applied heat-force*? They first sprang into existence, and have since continued to grow, as one of the results of a very simple discovery—the use of steam in producing motion. As another result of the same discovery, ships ply the waters of the globe without regard to winds or tides; mills and factories of every kind, and almost without number,

have been put in operation, free from restrictions of place; and a large part of the world's work is done by machinery impelled by the abundant and wonderfully tractable power of steam. The remarkable progress of the age in commerce and manufactures, in multiplying the comforts of life and the appliances of civilization, is attributable in no small degree to the development and use of a force additional to that of winds and waterfalls, and capable of easier and wider application.

The imagination can hardly conceive the effect of the sudden annihilation or withdrawal of these two forces, electricity and steam; and yet both have always been in existence, and are modern only in their use. It is that use, not only possible but actual, on which depend so many interests of industry and so much of human welfare. In this lower sphere of material interests, at least, the great practical question is a question of power, and of the right kind and actual use of power.

Does not the same question recur in higher affairs, and with vastly augmented importance?

Christianity establishes lines of communication reaching far beyond those of telegraphs and railways, and takes in hand a work greatly exceeding that of all manufactories combined. For success it requires numerous organizations and

agencies, a large amount and variety of machinery, the active employment of a multitude of laborers, and the investment of capital on an extended scale. In respect to mere instrumentalities, it is obviously subject to the same laws and conditions which govern all secular enterprises; for, however different its nature and purpose, it operates in the same world and through the same human agency. Accordingly it is already furnished in some measure with the external requisites of success. Christian organizations of many kinds have been established throughout the world; multitudes of people have been pledged and trained in the various departments of service; and millions of treasure have been expended in the erection and maintenance of churches, colleges, publishing houses, and missionary stations. But what are all these without the *appropriate moving power*? Unless that be supplied, is it not apparent that the work must either cease entirely or depend upon some alien force?

Human passions of various grades give impulse to the enterprises of the world, and *may* to those of the Church, even when such passions are more or less corrupt. The Gospel may be preached from envy and strife, or for filthy lucre's sake, or as a means of gaining personal fame

or social position. Prayers, exhortations, and all forms of conspicuous activity may be prompted by motives of vanity and ambition. Even revival meetings may be held chiefly, if not solely, for the purpose of increasing the congregation and the pew rents, or to counteract the aggressive competition of some neighboring Church. Indeed, there is no end of possible perversion and degeneracy while maintaining the semblance of Christian work; and, as the real power resides not in the form but in the spirit, the utter unsuitableness of motives not purely Christian is at once recognized.

Here as elsewhere correspondence or adaptation is indispensable. The difficult, exalted, and in every way peculiar nature of the work to be done, evidently requires the use of some force equally peculiar and distinctive; and that is certainly not to be found in ordinary human passions. Where, then, is it to be found? And in what does it consist?

As the work-itself is of God, so also is the true power from God. It has been the same from the beginning, the power to which Christianity owes its origin and establishment in the world, and it is nothing less than *divine love*.

But can this greatest power of God, the supreme glory of his nature, be brought in any

measure within the compass of human faculties? The answer needs no new discovery.

Christ was not only divine but human, and the perfectly human embodiment of this love. In some particulars likeness to Christ may be only approximate, but in respect to love it may be perfect and entire, by virtue of his spirit dwelling in us. To love as Christ loved, with love of the same kind, is the authorized and infallible test of true discipleship. Human nature, in all its faculties of body and soul, is the depository and apparatus and enginery through which this divine force is to come into actual and effective operation in the world; and no human nature is so poorly endowed or ill-conditioned that it may not serve the exalted purpose. The same love which brought the Savior from the skies, which constrained the great apostle to the Gentiles, which has wrought the grandest revolution the world has ever known, may dwell in the humblest child, and even in the wayfaring man though accounted a fool. Be the intellect bright or dull, the heart has a wondrous aptitude for love, and when open to God it receives and gives without measure.

Divine love in human hearts being thus universally and easily practicable, the question of securing all the working power needed becomes

a very simple matter, so simple, indeed, that it may fail of being properly regarded.

Now, is it not wise to accept just what God has appointed as being fully sufficient? Shall not the use of this simple and available force be insisted upon every-where?

It certainly is needed every-where and above every thing else. Much of the work of the Church is either left undone, or is done in extreme feebleness, because it offers no inducements to selfish gratification or worldly advantage; and this very work is often the most important of all, though it does not pay the unworthy motive. A stern sense of duty is doubtless able of itself to compel effort, but it is very likely to be overcome by disinclination, and at the best leaves its work cold and powerless. The fact is, Christian work of every kind, in order to be done with promptness and energy, or to be done at all, must have heart in it—the deep, strong love of the Christian heart.

Such love makes privilege of duty, gives delight to sacrifice, and joyfully accepts any possible service in view of the good to be accomplished. It is the very soul and life of labor, doing by its own promptings whatever it finds to do, whether great or small, whether seen of men or known only to Him who seeth in secret;

and to every work it imparts its own peculiar tenderness and warmth and life and power. As God's special provision, it has proved its sufficiency by every possible test through all the ages; and nothing is needed by the Church to-day so much as the "love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost." With this alone we are able to meet all demands, and give a full and satisfactory answer to the question of power.

XLII.

THE POINT TO BE GAINED.

ALL intelligent labor may be supposed to have some end in view, some one point to be gained in order to insure final success. That point, whatever it may be, necessarily determines the kind of labor to be expended, together with all the means and methods of work; practically, it is the only safe guide in every case. It should, therefore, be clearly defined before the mind of the worker, carefully studied in all its requirements, and kept in view at every step of the process.

What is the real point to be aimed at? And what does that particular point require as necessary in any attempt to gain it? Having obtained answers clear and satisfactory, work accordingly, employing only the means and methods evidently adapted to the desired result. Success will then depend only upon energy and perseverance in the work.

But if there be any doubt or misapprehension concerning the point to be gained, how can

effort be either intelligent or productive? If the traveler has no knowledge of his destination, or of any intervening points, how can he with confidence proceed at all? Of what practical value is zeal, or strength, or patient continuance in toil, unless they are suitably directed? The best motives, the greatest abilities, the mightiest organization and array of forces, the most approved methods and the most strenuous exertions will all utterly fail of effect if diverted from the true objective point.

In the more simple and ordinary affairs of life this point is rarely overlooked or mistaken. The plain common sense which usually has sway in such affairs gives it the greatest prominence, and brands neglect as folly and failure as incompetency. But, unhappily, greater affairs, and especially such as concern mind and character, seem to be regarded as belonging to quite another realm, and are subject to individual caprice, or to some iron rule of established precedent or prevailing custom. In such cases the work is in danger, and actually in course of becoming professional, perfunctory, mechanical, and complete in itself.

Educational and ecclesiastical institutions are sometimes looked upon as so many machines to be kept in operation according to certain

inflexible methods, whether the point is gained or not—because, forsooth, they have been erected. Maintain the forms at all hazards with scrupulous regard for the most trifling technicalities, and without the slightest reference to the end in view. Indeed, let conformity to forms be the end in view. Run the machinery for the sake of the machinery. Keep in full operation all the institutions of learning and religion, all the agencies of Christian civilization, in the home, the school, the Church, and all for the sake of the work itself, or at best because it is a duty; but never be simple or practical enough to look to any point beyond, or even to inquire whether there is any such point worth gaining.

Strange as it may appear, such is really the course pursued in cases almost without number. Even men, who are sensible in other things, admonish, reprove, exhort, teach, and do whatever may seem to be a duty, without reference to gaining the true point. The thing must be done, and therefore it is done without care for method or result. So government is administered and instruction is given in the family and the Sunday-school and the Church, with little thought of gaining the point. Is it wonderful that, in many instances, the point is never gained?

Now, we insist that the main thing in any work, and above all in the labors of a Christian, is understanding and gaining the right point. There are doubtless incidental benefits to the worker not to be depreciated; and the work is to be done whether it appears to be successful or not. But this work has a point to be gained which is of infinite importance, and for which it was expressly instituted. Until that point is gained, labor is to all intents and purposes in vain, and may well afford little satisfaction. Without doubt, it is a point of great difficulty; but so much the more should it be kept in view, and sought with all simplicity, earnestness, directness, tact, and perseverance, as the one point on which eternal destinies are suspended. Surely, if it is folly elsewhere, here it is crime to neglect definite and well-directed effort to gain the point.

What that point is, perhaps, no one would need to be told, but for the danger of overlooking or forgetting it. It is the point which God himself continually seeks to gain—*the consent and submission of the human will*.

This is the point of crisis, of responsibility, of destiny, with every human being—a point which he may hold against God and his fellows even to the last. But in most of cases, if not in

all, it may be gained by a certain kind of work expressly adapted to its peculiarities.

This is the work begun by him who "was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," and now "given unto us in the ministry of reconciliation."

On the part of God a great number and variety of means and methods are employed, all of which are perfectly adapted to gain joyful consent and submission, and are continually tending to this with vast actual results. But he uses the point, already gained with the willing and obedient, by committing to their hands "the Word of reconciliation," and requires their service in the same great work. Thus furnished with the means appointed by Infinite Wisdom, they are to seek the best method of teaching the Word of God, *so as to convince and persuade men.*

This work of the Christian, like all other work, allows a great variety of methods. In war, the conquest of the enemy by breaking his power is the point to be gained; and this may be done by killing, wounding, capturing, inducing desertion, cutting off supplies, etc. Any one of these and other methods, carried sufficiently far, would gain the point; but, to hasten the process, as many as possible are combined. A

similar variety of method is open to Christian enterprise, affording scope to every talent, a place to every worker, and hope of success, even in cases the most peculiar and difficult. By the very diversity of situation and circumstances—of individual talent, temperament, relations, and pursuits—express provision is made for all the means necessary to the largest success.

The selection of the most suitable method, in any given case, will of course require some knowledge of the individual—the more the better—and of human nature in general. But probably, without exception, the most direct way to the will lies *through the heart*.

Every human being is, in some respects, like an ancient castle, built with solid ramparts, and surrounded by a moat. The heart is the great gateway, with its portcullis and drawbridge, behind which the will keeps watch and ward, like a feudal lord. At this point the Great Sovereign makes the demand of right and the appeal of love; and all his ambassadors are to do likewise. To scale the walls or batter them down, if this were possible, certainly would not be gaining the point. Every body knows the truth of the old couplet:

“A man convinced against his will
Is of the same opinion still.”

Whoever would find the way to the very seat of responsible power, and there gain the consent and induce the action which begin a new life, must approach the gateway and open communication as a friend.

In short, to reach the heart, awaken interest, enlist the affections, is the best way of *gaining the will*.

XLIII.

CARRYING THE POINT.

ONCE upon a time, as the story goes, a man was driving through a small village in what he considered splendid style, when a little dog ran out after him, barking furiously, and was soon joined by another, according to the established custom of dogs in such cases. Provoked by the rude assault, he struck right and left with his whip; but this piece of indiscretion only increased the tumult, and presently he found the whole pack of village curs yelping at his heels. This was too much for his offended dignity; it would never do to be thus ignominiously defeated and driven from the field. Moreover, he had been taught and always had acted on the principle, "Accomplish whatever you undertake." So he stopped, tied his horse, and by a vigorous and well-directed onslaught succeeded in routing his assailants. Just as he was mounting again to his seat, flushed with triumph, a door opened not far away, and a shrill voice piped out, "Ah, mister, you've conquered, you've conquered—

the dogs." His laurels suddenly withered. He had carried his point, but without, previously asking whether it was worth carrying.

Misapplied effort is not confined to dog-whipping. It has numberless instances of greater and more difficult achievements, equally unworthy and barren of profit. The world is full of wasted energy, of inglorious and empty victories. Indeed, our hero is a representative character; not that all of the class to which he belongs are as soon and as forcibly reminded of the real value of their conquests, but that they are the victims of the same false notions and blind impulses.

There is a certain obstinate pride of success, a common inheritance, we suppose, which is very likely to play a conspicuous part in the drama of common affairs. It always has a point to carry, even though it be nothing more than its own vindication. Once committed to some ill-advised undertaking, it feels bound to go through with it at all hazards. It stops to ask no questions, and takes no counsel except of itself. Utterly blind and unreasoning, it refuses no challenge and brooks no defeat. Even to be barked at is an insufferable affront, calling for the highest assertion of one's manhood; but almost any thing suffices for a wager of battle.

As an instance not uncommon, somebody

does or says something, to which somebody else takes exception or shows resentment. Immediately this pride is aroused, and the issue is joined. Then, almost before they know it, the contending parties are taxing all their resources to secure a triumph, which turns out to be painfully full of evil or at the best ludicrously empty of good. So it often happens that courts of justice are crowded with trivial litigation, neighborhoods are embroiled in petty disputes, Churches are disturbed by internal dissensions provoked by the merest trifles, and even members of the same domestic circle are alienated over the most unimportant differences—all for the poor satisfaction of not having yielded a point never worth a moment's contention.

How well it would be in such provocations to take the precaution of the sober second thought! Men are not to be treated as dogs, though they may sometimes seem to bear a distant resemblance. But when they are so treated by reason of the resentments they inspire or the contests they open, the glory of victory is generally very much the same as with the hero of the whip.

The challenge, however, often comes from circumstances and things rather than men. It consists in the provoking resistance encountered in natural difficulties. Many an enterprise is

carried on, not because the promise equals the cost, but because it has been commenced, and failure now would be mortifying. The question is rarely entertained whether success would be any better.

Great expense has been incurred and many lives have been sacrificed in the numerous expeditions to find a north-west passage to India through a conjectural open Polar sea, and the end is not yet. Suppose the discovery were made, what good could ever come of it beyond the satisfaction of curiosity and the confirmation of a theory? An open sea, hemmed in by barriers of ice which have hitherto defied penetration, could never become a highway for commerce, and possible pleasure excursions to the North Pole would hardly have sufficient attractions to make them a paying business. Does the end justify the effort?

Many other projects of less magnitude are just as disproportioned to their best possible results. No little labor has been expended on schemes of perpetual motion and of aerial navigation, neither of which give the least promise of useful availability. After long years of indefatigable application, some one has succeeded in constructing an automaton, which is said to have marvelous powers of speech and song; but after

all it is nothing more than an ingenious toy. Another man finds the pride of his life in owning the horse which has made "the fastest time on record," and still another in securing the reputation of being the wealthiest and meanest man in the country. Success in these and a thousand similar ambitions is little better than conquering the dogs.

But the waste of resources or the inadequacy of results is not the worst thing in many attempts to carry the point. Nothing presents so great a temptation to the use of wrong. Nothing affords so strenuous a support to the vicious maxim, "The end justifies the means." Only in such attempts do we hear the specious plea, "Let us do evil that good may come." It is wonderful how otherwise good men sometimes strain a point of morals in order to carry a point of ambition. And yet something like this is done every day by men high in position and influence. So it seems at least to the dispassionate observer.

Does this pride of success, this absorbing devotion to a purpose, ever obscure the mental vision and blunt the moral sense? There certainly is danger of such an effect; and to be apprised of this should be a sufficient warning with all who believe that no success, however great, is able to compensate any sacrifice of principle, however small.

But success is not to be lightly esteemed because it is sometimes insufficient and ill-gotten. When it satisfies the question of what and how, it becomes the great object of life.

Pluck and persistence are admirable qualities if employed in an admirable service; and such service is always waiting for their achievements. Under divine direction they have a wide and worthy field of action with the most ample and unexceptionable means at their command. Indeed, it is because they are so loudly demanded in their proper sphere that their waste and perversion are so much to be deprecated. Let the will and skill now worse than lost in trivial and vicious pursuits be turned wholly in the right direction, and faithfully devoted to overcoming evil and removing obstructions to the elevation of the race, by the use of divinely appointed means, and our world would soon become the very portal of heaven.

For all the interests of life, both present and future, nothing is so much needed by every human being as true success in wisely selecting and then effectually carrying the point.

XLIV.

THE QUESTION OF METHOD.

WHEN practical results of any kind are sought, it is generally assumed, on the score of common sense, that something must be done. Two distinct questions then naturally arise: What to do? and, How to do it?

The first, perhaps because it is first, receives greater attention, and is ordinarily answered without difficulty and in general terms. It relates particularly to the act considered as a whole and in its adaptation to the end desired. The second, which is the question of method, is not less important, though it is often quite overlooked. It certainly is of little use to tell what to do without showing how to do it; and, unless the former implies the latter, additional and specific information respecting method is indispensable. Not a step can be taken intelligently and confidently without it.

To learn the best method of doing what is to be done requires patient investigation of all the ways and means at command; and to teach

it to others the process must be carefully explained or practically illustrated in all its details from beginning to end. This is work, and perhaps accounts for the apparent neglect of the question of method; but it is the very work which the world needs, and it is preliminary to success in all matters great and small.

The nature and importance of this question was once illustrated by a trifling incident in parsonage life. A stove cover had accidentally dropped upon a new and elegant Brussels carpet, and deposited a circle of soot in large flakes, very fragile and very black. Here was a practical problem. What was to be done? The soot must be removed, of course. But how could it be done without leaving traces on a carpet which the Church had recently furnished? Something more than money value was staked upon the issue. Sweep it up with a broom or a delicate brush? Such was the first thought, and it seemed to be the only way. But no, that would not do; for under the slightest pressure the soot would crumble and become imbedded in those beautiful meshes on which it was lightly piled up. Happily the pastor had obtained a few hints on method in the treatment of soot. Placing a dust-pan conveniently he transferred to it every particle of that dark threatening pile by the

breath of his mouth—he simply *blew it off*. Not a mark was left to indicate the fatal spot; the impending calamity of discouragement in furnishing the parsonage was averted; and joy was restored to the pastor's family through the success of the right method in so humble a matter as removing soot from a carpet. It was a case in point, and fully demonstrated the value of knowing how to do it.

This is precisely the kind of knowledge demanded in thousands of cases where infinitely greater interests are involved.

For instance, the inquiring penitent hears the encouraging words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

"But how shall I do it?" he replies. "What is believing on Christ? Make it so plain that I can get hold of it."

Poor man! The simple process is altogether new to him, and must be illustrated by something similar and already known. And so, all along the ages, Christians and Christian ministers have been engaged in explaining to the humble inquirer the way of faith. Indeed, this is their chief work, and will be in constant demand to the end of time. The Bible prescribes the act of faith; they must furnish illustration of the method.

Such is the work of Christian teaching—rendered necessary by the common difficulty of comprehending and performing an unaccustomed action, and presupposing the teacher's familiarity with the process of doing what is required, and his ability to make it plain to those who are groping in darkness. It deals with the question of method in its highest application, and shows how "to enter in at the strait gate" and to walk in "the narrow way that leadeth to life."

That this is the true view of the Christian's special work in behalf of others is fully confirmed by the terms of the great commission to the Church. "Go and teach all nations," said the risen Lord, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Here disciples themselves may well ask the question of method. *What* they are to do is definitely answered; they are to teach and to teach the observance—not the mere knowledge—of Christ's commands. But what is teaching? *How* shall we do it so as to win and to save? How teach not only the duty, but the way and means, of obedience?

It should be remarked that this is a question of the method of imparting the very knowledge needed by the world—the knowledge of method, or how to do the words of Christ. Happily it

has sufficient answer and abundant practical illustration in Christ's own example, who is the perfect Model of method in teaching and in doing all else. This fact should attract attention, and give prominence to the question of method in the family, the Sunday-school, the pulpit, and the whole life and work of the Christian.

Have we not, then, sufficient warrant for saying that the whole subject of method should undergo a careful and thorough review? It is a broad question and covers every enterprise of the Church. Are we successful in our way of doing things? If only partially so, may not a better method be discovered and adopted? If failure appears at any point, is it not attributable to a wrong or defective method?

The number of laborers, or of such as are able to labor, is not small; and there is really an abundance of sincere and earnest effort put forth by the Church. But what are the results? Are they commensurate with the work performed? Take any department for the examination—the Sunday-school, the work of the Christian home, the labors of the ministry, the support of the peculiar institutions of the Church such as the class-meeting, and attempts to reach the outcasts of society, to reclaim infidels, or to correct popular evils like intemperance and

Sabbath breaking. What is the measure of our success in all or in any one of these? Certainly far less than we desire—less even than we seem authorized to expect.

What and where is the fault? Are we doing work by machinery which could be done better by hand? Do we drive on through the crowd in chariots when we should walk in sandals? Have we the spirit and words and manner of brothers among our fellows? Are we sure of using the best method possible—the method the Master would use were he present in the body to do the same work?

Let us seek and inquire diligently and prayerfully for the true answer. Whatever fellow laborers of other Churches may do in so grave a matter, certainly *Methodists*, who are true to their name, will thus entertain the question of method.

XLV.

DEFECTIVE METHODS.

ARE the insufficient results of Christian work in any part traceable to defects in the methods employed? From what has been heretofore said on the subject of method, there seems to be a strong presumption that such is the fact. At any rate, the question is worthy of further consideration.

Taking for granted, what is perhaps too freely conceded by common complaint, that results are meager and out of all proportion to the efforts expended—and this is sometimes unquestionably true—where is the cause?

In other things we look to the work itself, and find, in the majority of instances, that toil is fruitless and energy is wasted simply because effort is misapplied. Ignorance or neglect of the right method of doing any thing is actually and necessarily a cause of failure, notwithstanding the utmost zeal and activity. From the very nature of the case, and by the evidence of innumerable facts, we are forced to the conclusion

that difference of method, in its broadest signification, may and generally does constitute all the difference between failure and success. Indeed, it is a self-evident proposition that no one succeeds in any work without knowing how, and acting accordingly.

Do results follow the same law when human agency is employed in its highest sphere, the work of the Gospel? Why not? The divine blessing is necessary to success in every good undertaking; but it is generally, if not always, bestowed on condition of the intelligent use of the right means. Is distinctive Christian work, among all the forms of labor, a solitary exception? No one can for a moment entertain such a thought.

This is in a peculiar sense God's own work, to which, in admitting human co-operation, he has granted the encouragement of special promises. Here, if anywhere, we may regard success as certain, and even look for results beyond the measure of the means employed by men. If, then, failure appears at any point, it certainly can not be attributed to a capricious withholding of the divine blessing, or to any indifference or neglect on the part of God. The fault must be somewhere in the human agency. It can not be deficiency of power, if the power possessed is

fully employed; for any lack in this respect is amply provided for by the sure pledge of divine aid. If all possible effort within the range of human ability is put forth, without commensurate results, it is more than probable that the fault consists in some neglect of adaptation, some mistake concerning the means or the process, some defect in the method of doing the work.

What, then, are the probable defects of the ordinary methods of Christian work in its various departments?

The main point is to secure attention to this one question. and lead all concerned to its thorough investigation. It has been quite too generally overlooked, while explanation of acknowledged failure has been sought in other directions. It is a well-known tendency of human nature to adhere to any established method, to keep on in the old way from sheer force of habit, and on the assumption that all is right, without taking the trouble to stop and ask such a question. In a plain matter of business, like that of carrying a grist to mill on horseback with a stone in one end of the bag to keep it balanced, a defective method would doubtless soon be discovered; but let the question be transferred to matters a little more occult, and it is quite another thing.

If it is worth while to correct a fault in that which is least, how much more in the greatest of all. The bare probability of any defect in the way of doing work for the Master should awaken earnest inquiry and secure prompt remedy.

The most profitable answer to the question, and the only one covering particular cases and embracing the needed specifications, is with individual workers, and may be found *by careful study of their own methods.*

Let these be analyzed, and considered in the bearing of every part on the results sought. Are they adapted to the qualities and condition of the material on which the work is wrought—such, for instance, as the general properties of mind, the peculiarities of the child to be instructed and trained, or the circumstances, prejudices, and wants of the widely different classes of society? Do they conform to the nature of the work itself—teaching the truth as it is in Jesus, so as to interest, and win, and save? Do they, in the several particulars of spirit, means, and process, meet all the requirements of the case? These and similar questions will be likely to detect the real qualities of any method, and bring to light its hidden faults.

Every one, who works at all, has some method, fixed or variable, which may be thus

examined, and far better by himself than by any one else. Defects, more or less serious, are probable in every case; but they are never so clearly seen or so readily corrected as when sought and found by one's own effort.

Certain methods, however, may be called ordinary, as being in common use with only the slightest variations. They are open to general criticism, and require much more of it than a paragraph can supply. Some of them are as inflexible and soulless as a machine, and are wholly mechanical in their operation. Others are empirical, like patent medicines, recommended for all cases, and used without the least discrimination. Not a few are stereotyped, after the manner of books, and can not therefore be changed, though sadly in need of new editions, revised and improved. On the other hand, the best methods are somewhat like good trees, uniform in a few general features, with the numerous specific differences which mark the individual or species, and all endowed with a living growth and bearing the fruit for which they were designed. Such methods of Christian work conform to the general principles regulating the communication of knowledge and the influence of mind upon mind, and suitably apply them to the peculiarities of particular cases.

In ordinary methods, the most probable defect is a lack of close approach and mutual understanding, sympathy, and confidence between the parties concerned; or of right beginning, gradual progress, and minute life-like detail at the fitting opportunity; or of patient repetition, loving persistence, with wise adaptation to individual peculiarities, and the enthusiastic earnestness of a faith which laughs at impossibilities and resolves it shall be done.

XLVI.

NECESSITY OF SPECIAL TRAINING.

WITHOUT detracting from the value of the broad and liberal education which aims at the systematic development of all the powers of mind and body, special training for every profession or pursuit of life is now justly regarded as a necessity. With the wider range of knowledge and action opened before us in the progress of civilization, this necessity is becoming more and more apparent.

No one can know and do every thing equally well. The best results are reached by the division of labor and the exercise of the skill which is obtained by special application in each department, and the best results of all effort is what the world needs and demands. The tendency of the age is, therefore, toward specialties in science, in art, and in all the industries of life.

Not even genius for a chosen calling exempts its possessor from the necessity of special training if he would attain the greatest success. How much more, then, is such training necessary

where no special aptitude exists. In such cases, and they are by far the most numerous, all success must depend upon the skill acquired by practice under suitable instruction. So, then, whatever be the general culture, special training must be superadded to secure the highest qualification for any work.

If this is true in independent individual enterprise, it must be also, by still greater reason, where large results are sought by extensive combinations, as in the art of war or in the work of the Church.

In the organization of armies for real service military drill is deemed indispensable. It anticipates the battle, and renders the part which each one has to perform perfectly familiar by constant repetition beforehand. It aims at the greatest effectiveness by securing for all the separate and combined movements of the conflict the full force of established habit. To a certain extent it may be simply preparatory by exercises, conformed to the manual, in the school or the camp; but to be complete it requires the sterner discipline of actual war. This brings out the highest military qualities, constitutes "veterans," whose superiority is sure to be seen in the tests of the campaign, and gives to an army of able-bodied men the utmost effective strength. The neces-

sity of thorough discipline has been so fully demonstrated in all the history of war, that no government would be justified in sending to the field raw, undisciplined troops, except in the greatest emergency; and therefore no government requiring an army is found guilty of neglecting special military instruction and drill.

Now, if the Church is a grand military organization—not figuratively, but in stern reality and in the highest and best sense of resistance, attack, and conquest—what shall we say of special training for the Christian warfare? Is it not absolutely indispensable? Should it not be accepted as a fundamental and vital necessity in every department of the service, and in the case of all recruits, young and old, from the least to the greatest? Can it be neglected without imminent peril, not only to the individual, but to the whole army?

The fact is, no work in the world demands special personal and associated training, and the resultant skill and force, more imperatively than this, which comprehends in its issues the safety of the soul and the deliverance of the race. To talk or play the soldier merely is to remain in bondage still, and to leave the world under the rule of ruin. The nature of the contest, its weapons and methods, and the character of the

foe offer no place for "carpet knights." Not even the promised aid of Omnipotence procures exemption from utmost effort. Every Christian is a soldier in very deed, and must fight or perish. Every Christian, therefore, needs the discipline of a soldier for his own defense, as well as for his usefulness in behalf of others. And all Christians should be so united, organized, and trained as to secure for every one and for the whole body the greatest possible effectiveness in the overthrow and extermination of ignorance, error, and sin.

This special Christian training belongs partly to each individual, who must seek and accept it, and, for the other part, to parents and pastors and teachers, who are bound by the most solemn obligations to institute it in suitable forms, and conduct it wisely and well. It should begin at the earliest age in the family, in connection with the daily life, and be carried forward steadily in the Sunday-school and the Church by means and methods which God has provided; and not one of the weakest or most obscure should ever be overlooked.

But this training implies work connected with instruction, something for every one to do continually. It supposes, therefore, great earnestness and activity in the Church, the progress of

forward movements bringing out the whole force, and the wise administration of all its affairs. Only a living, aggressive Church can train up good soldiers for Christ. Thus the training necessary to the individual is closely connected with all the interests of the Church. It is, indeed, the one great work and need of the Church, and all the more because it is not neglected among the opposing forces. It is the great idea of the Gospel, first and last, and is made prominent in all the dispensations of Providence.

God himself provides special personal discipline for man in all the circumstances and events of his earthly life, as well as in the religious duties required by the written Word. In fact, we may regard the whole period of human probation as a scheme of special training, where God directs the process, permits our co-operation, and furnishes all needful aid. If, then, God gives command, to become fully qualified for his service is of the highest obligation, and should be the steady, earnest aim of all who really mean to serve the Lord of all.

That which is so important for every Christian, as such, and for the whole body of the Church, is, if possible, still more necessary for such as are invested with the responsibilities of teachers, and are thus required to train others.

Ministers of the Gospel, Sunday-school teachers, parents, and all every-where who are contributing by their influence to the formation of character, need special study and training themselves in order to do well the greatest work committed to human beings.

It is passing strange that a necessity so obvious should not secure more earnest heed, and that systematic attempts to meet it should ever be regarded as an innovation.

The apostles sought to be "able ministers of the New Testament," and exhorted others to "study to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that needed not to be ashamed." Not to mention other Churches, the fathers of Methodism provided for the training of the early itinerants, not by Biblical Institutes—for at that time such schools could not be adapted to the case—but by preparatory labor and experience as class-leaders, exhorters, and local preachers, and by probation in the conference and the discipline of hard service as junior preachers on circuits with competent colleagues. And, indeed, the whole economy of the Church recognizes the necessity of special training. It should therefore be provided for workers of every grade and in every department—no one contradicting. Institutes of every kind, for pastors and Sun-

day-school teachers, and all efforts at special training, should receive the heartiest encouragement and support. Any other policy is blind and ruinous.

Let us, then, submit to a necessity imposed by the Author of our being, and show by thoroughness of training our exalted estimate of the Master's work.

XLVII.

OUR SECULAR RELATIONS.

NOTHING is more common than to hear Christians complain of business as interfering with their religious enjoyments; and there really does seem to be something wrong in the matter. But we confess our inability to discover any necessary antagonism between legitimate business and spiritual life. Indeed, we doubt whether such a discovery has ever been made by any one. Antagonism there may be, but is it necessary? Does it arise from the constitution of things, or from something incidental and avoidable?

If some real evil is lurking in our secular relations, it is well to know just where and what it is, how it came there, who is responsible for it, and what may be done for its removal. At least one point is gained if we can show that, whatever it may be, it is not intrinsic and necessary.

In the ordinary way of thinking and speaking, the work of the Christian ministry is a sacred calling, and every other is secular. Per-

haps for the sake of convenience it is well to make this distinction. The ministerial calling is peculiarly sacred, since it deals more specially and directly with sacred things, and with such as are of transcendent import. It is therefore worthy of all the honor and reverence which it usually receives. Even this calling, however, in strictness of speech, is secular; for it is pursued in the world, and for the world, and requires the co-operation of numerous worldly agencies, and so will continue even unto the end of the world. Is it any the less sacred because of these secular connections?

And the other callings—while distinctly secular, are they in no sense sacred? Different qualities may be combined in the same thing; and many things are quite distinct without being mutually opposed. So it is here. The antithesis implied in the ordinary use of the terms secular and sacred is a mere assumption, resting upon no essential inconsistency of the one with the other. Every calling in life should be both secular and sacred. There is nothing in the real nature of material things—whatever may be said of their use, there is no intrinsic evil—to render them inimical to the highest spiritual interests.

No being in the universe has more to do with secular affairs than God himself. He made the

world, owns the world, governs the world, and is present throughout the world, upholding all things by the word of his power. The laws of nature, so called, are only the methods of his operation. Without his presence and aid no flowers bloom ; no harvests ripen ; the telegraphs, railroads, steamships, and factories are silent ; not a wheel of the world's machinery moves ; and all secular life is at once arrested. His care extends even to the most minute functions of our bodies, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice. And this world is only one of a countless number, in which he is the same all-pervading and controlling Presence.

The old heathen doctrine of the essential depravity and evil influence of matter was one of the vain conceits of the human understanding, unable to see God in his works, and beholding all things through the discolored medium of its own evil passions. There is, indeed, opposition to God arising from his own creatures—the great sad fact in the history of angels and men ; but it is strictly confined to intelligent spirits, or free moral agents. Through the whole realm of matter, and among all the ranks of animated being below the human soul, not the slightest trace can be found of antagonism to God.

Is not this fact enough ? If God is in such

intimate association and harmony with the visible forms of his own creation, there surely can be no incompatibility between them and his life in the souls of men.

As God is connected with matter, so also is man, though in a different way. The connection of the soul with the body, and through the body with the world at large, is one of the greatest wonders of creation. So far as we know, there is nothing like it in the universe.

By this close relation to the material world God gives us dominion over it, and invests us with a subordinate sovereignty bearing some distant resemblance to his own. He thus takes us into a kind of copartnership in the administration of secular affairs, and cements this partnership by making soul and body dependent upon himself. Such is the honor with which he has distinguished us among his intelligent creatures, and it certainly can not be an honor fraught with necessary evil. We stand related on the one side to created matter, and on the other to the Creating Spirit, combining in our own constitution the nature of both. This is union—not antagonism—organized by infinite wisdom and goodness. The connection of the “living soul” with the present world was the crowning work of the creation; and when “God

saw every thing that he had made, behold it was very good."

Are we authorized now to pronounce a different sentence? Can any one believe that God's order in nature is really at variance with the interests which called forth the gift of his only begotten Son?

The natural and the spiritual are only distinct departments of one vast domain, in which "the Lord our God is one Lord." Each has its own provisions and laws; but they are from the same Lawgiver, and can never therefore come into mutual conflict.

The harmony of the universe is nowhere more apparent than in the established relation of matter and mind. The former is made subject to the latter, and is designed to serve the higher interests. The body, when duly controlled, faithfully performs its office as the tenement and instrument of the soul. So also is all related matter in some way subservient, when rightly used.

For reasons which thus appear, the first man was put into the garden of Eden "to dress it and to keep it;" and there he found a legitimate business, while enjoying the highest spiritual privileges. Since then the whole earth eastward and westward has become a garden, which the

Lord God has planted and peopled, provided with suitable occupations, and blessed with all the means required for the higher life. Though man himself has changed, the fundamental laws and conditions of his well-being remain the same. Some useful worldly employment, some contact with material things, is still necessary to the best spiritual development, and even to perfect mental soundness.

Is it not probable that the evil complained of is, after all, to be found much nearer home—within rather than without?

XLVIII.

THE EVIL IN BUSINESS.

IT seems to be taken for granted, by many persons, that they can not attain the largest growth in grace while engaged in business, and burdened with its cares. Whether this is their sincere belief or not, it unhappily serves as an apology for a low spiritual condition. They could be much better Christians were they in other circumstances, where they would have less to do with the world. If instances are adduced where eminent piety has been found in the most active business life, such cases are, in their estimation, exceptional; it can not be so with them.

Now, if what they allege of themselves is true, it should be looked into at once, and relief should be obtained at any cost. What are the interests of a brief temporal business, which may be suspended at any moment, as compared with the welfare of the soul? It is better, infinitely better, if need be, to withdraw entirely from the world, and to suffer the loss of all earthly things, than to fail of eternal life. But

it is not necessary; God has not so ordered it. He has placed us here, and evidently intends that we shall remain here, in the midst of worldly employments, until he calls us up higher. He is here himself, and has constituted the world to be occupied and used by just such beings as we are, in humble dependence upon his favor and aid.

But evil is here also; and, as it consists in opposition to God, there must be more or less of it in any business which stands opposed to his kingdom in the human soul. As evil can not exist in the nature of the things which enter into our business occupations, we must look for it in their use, or, rather, their abuse.

The abuse of the best gifts is possible from the very nature of free moral agents. It is possible before infirmity is contracted by sin. It is possible, even without the intervention of any material things whatever. "The angels who kept not their first estate," which consisted of the highest spiritual gifts and privileges, were guilty of perverting them to a wrong use. It scarcely need be added, that they suffered in consequence a loss never to be repaired.

In the same way occurred the first great spiritual injury to man. The trees of the garden were all good, not excepting that whose fruit

was forbidden, and were in no sense the cause of sin. It was simply the question of their use which man decided. This question was not left in doubt, to be made a matter of experiment. The wrong use was clearly pointed out, and expressly forbidden, by the just and beneficent law of the Creator; but, after all, the wrong use prevailed—with what results, we know to our sorrow.

So has it been through all history, and so it is still—natural good perverted to an evil use, with consequences to correspond. Not a little of the business of the world is notoriously and outrageously evil, not by reason of the nature of the things used, but always and solely by their unlawful use. In all cases the results are the same as were declared in the beginning—injury and ruin to the soul, and often to the body. Death is the wages of sin; sin is the transgression of the law; the law relates to use—the use of all that God has given—prescribing the right, or prohibiting the wrong; and the use of whatever he is or has is submitted to the decision of every responsible individual. Such is the stream whose fountain is the human heart and will. Since the first breaking away from law, and with the moral infirmity thus entailed, the tendency to wrong use has

become so deep and strong as to corrupt the world's life, and produce all the evil in business.

With Christians, it may be supposed that the evil is corrected at the fountain-head, according to the evident purpose of the Gospel; and this is the fact when the understanding is duly enlightened, and the work of the Holy Spirit is fully accomplished and maintained in the heart. Certainly no one can be considered a Christian whose business is in any way immoral, as when it is hurtful to society, or is carried on by open or secret fraud, extortion, and the like. But it often happens that false views of life are entertained, or the Spirit's work in the heart is by some means hindered; and, in any case, the natural liability to error still remains.

Thus it is possible for real Christians to misuse the things of this life, not in the grosser ways of vice, and yet to their own great spiritual injury. In fact, nearly all who are engaged in what is considered legitimate business are more or less involved in worldliness, which is only another name for misuse of the world. In this form the evil is so wide-spread, and withal so injurious in its effects, as to give occasion for very serious concern.

It therefore behooves every Christian to inquire into his own business life, and carefully

compare it with the whole law of God. The one great question for all is, How do we use worldly things?

In considering this question, every one should bear in mind that it comprehends far more than outward acts. No answer can be just or safe if it stops here. Right or wrong use begins in the heart, and, like a stream to be explored, must be followed up to its very fountain. It is not difficult to see that the part taken by the hands in the use of worldly things is small, compared with that of the feelings, desires, and purposes.

The law of God, therefore, very properly traces all actions to their source, and becomes a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It accomplishes its purpose concerning external things by regulating the whole internal machinery called into play in their use. It is quite as clear and explicit in its application to the heart as to the outward life, while it is the one appointed standard of present test and of the final judgment.

Now, in every case where business interferes with spiritual interests, let it be thoroughly tested by the Word of God, and the mystery is solved at once. Some evil, within or without, will surely be brought to light.

Perhaps it is excessive devotion to worldly

pursuits, which is an abuse simply because it is excessive, absorbing both time and strength, to the neglect of other and higher duties. Or, perhaps, in the motives of business, self is taking the place which belongs to the Lord Jesus, who "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." Or it may be that worst of all abuses—allowing worldly things to become the rival of God in the affections of the heart.

Concerning these and all other perversions of the gifts of God, the light which has come into the world leaves not a single doubt; and every one who comes to the light may be sure that spiritual loss is a necessary result of any evil in business.

XLIX.

CONVERSION OF MONEY.

MONEY is convertible, in a commercial sense at least; otherwise it would be of no value. Its chief purpose is to represent property as a convenient medium of exchange. Whatever answers this purpose may be called money, whether it be the shells and beads of savage tribes or the bank-notes, bills of exchange, and coin of civilization. The money of one country may be converted into that of any other, through a comprehensive system of exchange provided and maintained among all civilized nations. Without such an arrangement travel and commerce would, of course, be impossible. If money were not readily convertible at certain rates of value into any desired commodity, any thing offered for sale and required for use, it would lose at once the character of money.

But in a far higher and nobler sense money is capable of conversion.

Heaven is a country which many of us are seeking as a permanent home, where we expect

to dwell through a happy eternity. It is none the less real because it is out of sight and a purely spiritual realm; and, indeed, it lies just before us, separated, at the furthest, by only a few short years. There, as well as here, we shall have need of treasure; but in our passage thither we shall be compelled to leave behind us all our earthly possessions. Even were it possible to carry our money with us, it would be found to be uncurrent there. Must, then, the accumulations of honest toil, the results of life-long labor in the present world, amount to nothing with the emigrant in his future home? Have the treasures of earth no equivalent in heaven? Let the question be fairly considered, and it becomes invested with the most intense interest.

Happily, a system of transfer has been established, which is simple, safe, and effective. Every Christian pilgrim may here convert his money into heavenly riches, and send it on before.

To the young inquirer in the Gospel the Lord of both worlds said, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And to all he gives the command, "Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupt-

eth." Explicit directions for doing this are found in the apostolic charge to such as have any portion of the riches of this world: "That they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good; that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Thus there is brought to light in the Gospel the great fact of the intimate connection of earth with heaven, the far-reaching effects of the present life, and the glorious possibilities of earthly toil. Some part of every dollar, lawfully earned amid the busy scenes of a fleeting and material world, may be added to "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven," to await our entrance upon its eternal possession. The investment can be made with the utmost ease, in the largest or the smallest sum, without cost for premium, and on occasions continually present and pressing. Every benevolent society of the Church is a duly constituted bank of exchange, and every Christian enterprise affords a sure and expeditious means of transfer.

To the sordid worldling, intent only upon the

things of this life, this may all seem to be visionary and unreliable; but to the Christian, who "looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," nothing can be more certain or more inviting. Spiritual benefits or good done to the souls of men shall abide forever; and into such good his money may in a thousand ways be converted. Is it any wonder, then, that he is industrious, economical, and benevolent? Can a higher or stronger motive be furnished for money-making and *money-giving*?

The fact is, the whole scheme of systematic beneficence, established by the Gospel of Christ, is in effect quite as beneficent to the benefactor as to the beneficiary. It is really one of the greatest privileges which God has bestowed upon man; and converts the otherwise sordid transactions of worldly business into an exalted Christian work, whose fruits shall be gathered in the skies.

But while this conversion of money into spiritual benefits infallibly secures a provision for "everlasting habitations," it has other most important aspects and sanctions.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." This remains true through the whole course of human rebellion; God can never relinquish claim

to any part of his own domain. But the rebellion which has covered the earth has also wickedly perverted its fullness. To a very great extent, the wealth of the world has been turned against God and his kingdom, taking his place in the hearts of men, and becoming his rival in the service of their lives. Even when it is not acquired by methods of evil, it is often devoted to forbidden uses, and made the means of ruin to soul and body. As the object of an idolatrous regard and one of the chief agencies of the powers of darkness, money has obtained an infamous distinction, and is appropriately called in the Scriptures "filthy lucre" and "the mammon of unrighteousness." Beyond all question, it needs to be *converted to God*, changed from a curse to a blessing, restored to right practical relations to God as the great Proprietor of all, and to men as the stewards of his bounty.

Such a conversion of money is indispensable to the conversion of the world, not only because money is a part of the world which has been estranged from God, but also for the reason that it is a most important instrumentality in the prosecution of the great work. So far as this work is committed to human agency it requires the combination of labor and capital, of converted men and converted means; and the latter

is as necessary as the former. When money has been fully turned "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God," it becomes at once as mighty an agency for good as it was before for evil, and shares with God and man the glorious co-partnership of the work of human redemption.

But the task of converting money belongs to men, to men of God laboring in the world. It is the great problem of Christian business, and gives to that business a peculiar significance and the highest importance.

The process is exceedingly plain and simple. The conversion of any business man may be supposed to reach and include his pocket, his houses, lands, and merchandise, all that he has or is able to acquire. This is a matter of course; for how can it be otherwise? The cause carries with it the effect; the greater includes the less; the conversion of soul and body embraces the results of their joint action. Whoever yields to God all that he is, yields also all that he has. The property of all true Christians may be assumed, therefore, to be already converted. Now let them proceed in business on Christian principles, under the mighty inspiration of the love of Christ, and all the money they make is so much more secured and dedicated to God.

L.

“FOR VALUE RECEIVED.”

AS every body knows, this is the regular and significant formula of business. Commercial transactions, in order to be such, always suppose a consideration,—value received for value rendered. Otherwise, they sink below the level of legitimate business into the depths of fraud and crime, or, taking the opposite direction, rise to the heights of pure beneficence. Honesty requires that the actual exchange of commodities shall be made on the basis of equivalents fairly estimated; and so jealously are the rights of property guarded, that if the exchange on the one part remains to be completed at some future time according to the terms of a written pledge, that pledge must acknowledge the value received. This is simple buying and selling, with due regard to individual rights; and the rule of equal values is unquestionably of immense importance to all the interests of business.

To some extent, the same rule seems to be carried into effect outside of strictly commercial

transactions. Among a certain class of people, ordinary social relations are often adjusted upon a basis of carefully estimated equivalents. Courtesies are shown, favors are bestowed, and services are rendered from merely mercenary motives. Nothing of the kind is ever done without the implied expectation of interchange and reciprocation, thus cutting off every case where such expectation can not be met. The question most frequently asked is, “Will it pay? Will the probable advantages to be derived from this or that neighborly act be a sufficient compensation for the necessary expenditure of time and trouble?”

With persons who are governed only by the motives implied in such soliloquizing, friendship itself is brought into the market, and rated according to the value received or expected. If a friend, so called, has both the ability and the willingness to serve one, he is to be retained at any cost not exceeding the value of his services; if lacking in either, he is of no further account, even though he be a man of the highest personal worth.

Under this rule, the worth of any human being is estimated, not by his intrinsic qualities of character or his general usefulness to mankind, but rather by the use to which he can be

put in promoting the personal ends of the party particularly interested. If men of wealth, position, or influence, are courted by special and perhaps obsequious attentions, it is not out of respect to their real merits, but solely in view of the probable profit of their favor; and when their favor ceases to have an appreciable value they at once sink out of sight among the common herd. The self-seeking politician is conspicuously devoted to his constituents, so long as he can hope for their support; his political allies are in like manner subservient to his wishes, until they receive their utmost share of the spoils; and the mutual casting off takes place when nothing more can be expected. But this is only a familiar example in the sphere of politics.

Such is the way of the world in nearly all its combinations and alliances, from the relations subsisting between nations down to the simplest interchanges of social life. Whatever may be the nature of the benefit, it is bestowed on the consideration that "one good turn deserves another," and is accepted with the pledge, expressed or implied, "I'll do as much for you some time." Thus the rendering of favors only for value received or anticipated, while it is not without noble exceptions, has the sanction of a

quite too common practice, and almost the force of a general rule.

What better could be expected under the reign of sordid selfishness? Its most approved mottoes are unblushingly flaunted before the eyes of men: “All baggage at the risk of the owner!” “Look out for No. 1!” “Every man for himself!” and many more of the same sort. Such a spirit is often restive under the exactions of simple justice, and would wantonly violate all the sanctities of honorable business, but for the restraints of law and the danger to personal interests. Indeed, as opportunity serves, it occasionally breaks through all restraints, and gives ample proof of its very light esteem for even the established moralities of trade. What wonder, then, if men who are animated by no better spirit generally set aside the obligations of benevolence, and carry their only motives into all the relations of life? They simply follow their natural bent and their cherished habits of feeling and action.

But is such selfishness to be universal and supreme, having all men under its control? What of those who are called Christians? Are not they to be, in this respect, always and altogether unlike the mercenary men of the world?

Surely, the law proclaimed by Him who

“taught as one having authority” gives promise of an entire change in the fundamental principle of social intercourse. “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?” “And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind ~~unto~~ to the unthankful and to the evil.”

So there is a new and better life for men, even here. The world, where selfishness has usurped so controlling an influence, is something more than a mere mart for traders. Human beings have higher functions than buying and selling and getting gain. Their choicest treasures and noblest services have no price at all, and never appear in the market. While rendering value for value received in matters of exchange—thus providing things honest in the sight of all men—it is also their high prerogative

freely to give, hoping for nothing again. Trade is like a faithful servant, charged with the duty of procuring needful supplies on equitable principles; benevolence, as master of the house, generously dispenses the commodities of trade, and its own richer treasures, to the one end of the greatest possible good. The proper motives of trade are found in the demands of benevolence; and the double office belongs to every man by virtue of his own higher nature and his manifold relations to others.

But, while benevolence seeks no equivalent for gifts bestowed or services rendered, nothing in all the enterprises of trade brings such sure and large returns. Under the administration of God, it becomes its own exceedingly great reward, enriching the soul, beautifying the life, and securing a happiness which is infinitely more than “value received.”

LI.

UNDER THE SAME LAW.

IT is an interesting practical question, whether one man is bound more than another to devote himself entirely to the service of Christ, or the work of doing good.

Take an instance not unfrequently occurring. William and John are brothers of equal, though different, ability. They go forth from the same home, are graduated at the same college, and then enter upon their life work, one as a minister of the Gospel and the other as a man of business. William becomes extensively useful by entire devotion to ministerial duties; but receives only a comfortable support for himself and family, and hardly that. John prospers in business until he has an immense income, with corresponding opportunity of self-indulgence; and both alike are properly recognized as true Christians.

Now, does the difference of calling involve a difference of law and obligation and purpose of life? Must the minister, because he is a minister,

make personal sacrifices for the sake of the kingdom of God, and his brother go entirely free because he is not a minister, but only a man of business? Can the one be bound to remain content with the bare necessities or, at most, the ordinary comforts of life, and the other be at liberty to indulge in all its luxuries?

It is not a question of power or opportunity, but of duty and privilege as servants of Christ. The minister, with less devotion to his work, might secure the means of luxurious ease, but he denies himself for the sake of doing the greater good. The layman already has in his hands the means of gratification,—and this is the real difference,—but shall he, like his brother, deny himself for the sake of doing the greater good? Is he equally bound to do so? That is the question.

The answer can hardly be a matter of doubt. Whatever the law in the case may be, it is the same for all. Whatever the motives of service may be, they are possessed in common, and are fully sufficient for every demand. Self-denial is universally required, and should therefore be practiced, not merely where it is unavoidable, but freely, voluntarily, for Christ's sake. However Christians may differ in respect to gifts and employments and circumstances, they all have

the same great calling; and that is to serve the one Lord to the full extent of their ability. God does indeed require a vast variety of service both of men and of means, but it is essentially one, and always for himself—the work of doing all possible good in the world.

In this service the minister and the layman have co-ordinate parts. The former—specially, though not exclusively—has the ministry of the word; the latter—specially, though not exclusively—has the ministry of money. Both are indispensable to the success of the work, are equally worthy of their hire, and should be first partakers of the fruit; but neither is at liberty to appropriate to his own gratifications more than is needful to secure the best conditions of continued usefulness in the common service. If entire devotion to doing good is required of the one by the eloquent use of speech, entire devotion to doing good is also required of the other by the consecrated use of money.

If these statements are true—and their truth seems to be really self-evident—then certain very practical conclusions must follow. A thoroughly sincere and hearty belief never stops in verbal declarations, but goes out into every part of active life, and finds appropriate expression in every legitimate calling.

It certainly would be a very fine thing for the Church and the world if every Christian business man were to make and use money just as the minister preaches, with the same motives, to the same end, and under the same restrictions upon self. He would probably have more money or property than the minister, for that is his capital, or means of usefulness, like the minister's learning and eloquence; but he would keep it within the limits of necessary capital, use for himself and family only the amount required for a comfortable support, and then turn all the profits into the enterprises of humanity and God. Instead of the accumulation of property beyond the requirements of a safe and profitable business, or the squandering of any part of it upon needless self-indulgence, the whole matter of possession and use would be joyfully submitted to divine direction.

In such a case, how would the secular calling, with all its vexations and temptations, be enriched with the inspiration and life and power of a present Christ! It might then claim and enjoy a spiritual blessedness equal to that of the ministry, by reason of occupying the same exalted plane of self-denial and divine consecration.

Besides, Christian enterprises would no longer

go limping and halting through the world from paralysis of one side. Capital would be furnished along with labor, equal to the demands of the most rapid progress. Indeed, we might look for a perpetual and universal Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and with it not exactly a community of goods, but such use of them as strictly comports with human stewardship under Christ as sole Proprietor.

“The deceitfulness of riches” is proverbial. Men of business are in constant association with the servants of mammon, and are in great danger of imbibing their spirit. Covetousness has innumerable disguises, and is never at a loss for plausible pretexts. Ministers hesitate to preach plainly and pointedly upon the subject, lest their motives should be misinterpreted. Even the suggestions of this chapter may be treated as incontrovertible abstractions, suitable for a theorizing student, but wholly impracticable in real life. What! every man bound, like the minister, to devote himself wholly to the service of Christ—by making and using money, as well as by preaching the Word?

Well, it may be left as a question for laymen, to be decided in the presence of the Crucified, in the light of eternity, and then in actual service under Christian law.

LII.

THE TEST OF THE TILT.

TWO mailed and mounted knights happened to meet beneath a shield suspended over the way, and stopped to read its heraldry and admire its workmanship. Looking at it from opposite directions, they soon fell into a dispute concerning its material, one claiming it to be brass, the other, iron. Each of course was positive in a matter so plain to himself; and as their honor seemed to be involved in the mutual contradiction, the doughty knights promptly appealed to the arbitrament of arms. So with lances in rest they came together at full speed, and passing each other unharmed turned to renew the tilt. But now they had changed places, and on again approaching the shield they made a startling discovery. Both had been right, and both had been wrong; for the shield was brass on one side, and iron on the other. As the onset had only reversed their positions without inflicting personal injury, their honor was duly vindicated, the whole truth was seen, and a wholesome lesson was taught.

Every body has heard the story, and of course every body is fully convinced that every question has two sides, excepting—every rule has exceptions—that particular question on which he himself happens to be engaged in dispute. That is a very different thing, not at all like the shield. In fact, it is just as he sees it to be; and whoever opposes his view is altogether wrong, and either blindly or willfully opposed to the truth. And so the story of the shield is remembered only as it illustrates a glittering abstraction; but still it is having constant repetition in real life, and often with the sequel omitted. Human nature is doubtless very much the same now as in the days of knight-errantry; it has no new power by which to see both sides of a question from one point of observation, and is quite as much as ever inclined to maintain its *ex parte* statements by personal encounters. But unfortunately the prevalent method of combat brings about no favorable exchange of places and views; and it is more likely to become an absorbing trial of the lance than a successful search for the truth.

But now, to make matters still worse, somebody declares the old and approved illustration to be imperfect, having only one-third of the actual truth. Just as if two sides to a question were not fully enough for honorable knights and

all other people, every question, it is said, is a *cube*, and therefore has six sides.

Can this be true? What then are controversialists to do? What, but to fight on to the bitter end, or not fight at all? Who, in this age of feverish haste, can stop long enough to look at the six sides of any question? If the afore-said knights merely happened to see the other sides of a two-sided shield, how can modern knights be expected in the heat of controversy to discover four sides more, and end the dispute by finding out the truth? And if all sides must be seen before the tilt can be justified, how can any one ever have the opportunity of breaking a lance? Then, what becomes of the manly art of—getting the victory? Must not the lance be thrown away, and every hero descend to the ignoble work of turning over cubes?

But the choice between two such widely different ways of settling disputes, deeply concerns the interests of peace in the world, and especially in the Church. If the real or metaphorical tilting of the lance in personal conflict be the one infallible method of getting at truth, or the method generally adopted, when may we look for peace by the universal discovery of truth? Let it be considered, that on any one of the countless questions of difference among men,

six different parties can be brought into the field—all under the pretext of truth, and honor, and conscience—and certainly the test of the tilt becomes no trifling matter. And moreover, who knows but that instead of cubes, we may by and by find dodecahedrons, and all sorts of polyhedrons up to the very highest number? Then if any polyhedral question is to call out a champion for every one of its sides, we can hardly imagine the scene of strife which must ensue. Already the numerous aspects of questions relating to Christian experience, social reforms, and various ecclesiastical modifications, are having the effect of the Highland slogan, and filling all the field with representative clansmen, eager for the fray. And what a fray it must be, if every possible difference of opinion is to be accepted as the mark of an adversary and a wager of battle! At such a spectacle of confusion worse confounded, even a veteran knight “without fear and without reproach” might stand aghast, and cry out, “Let us have peace!”

Surely there must be some better way of discovering truth than by measuring arms in a struggle for victory. Victory and truth are often widely apart, and are never identical. Had one of our valiant knights unhorsed the other, or pierced the joints of his harness, the event

could have had no possible effect upon the question in dispute. It might have silenced his opponent, but certainly would not have proved his statement either true or false. Meanwhile, the shield was there, with both sides open to view, and needing only the change in position by which they could be discovered. Happily such change brought the discovery, although it was by the merest chance, and in despite of the absorbing interest of the new and altogether different question of knightly valor and skill. If that had been the point at issue, the use of arms would have been legitimate and decisive; but the original question required only the *right use of the eyes*.

A combat in itself proves nothing but the qualities of the combatants, and the supreme folly of submitting to such a test any other point of dispute. Whatever the question of difference may be, it is that and nothing else which claims attention and requires decision.

In most cases, therefore, controversy in the interest of truth is controversy with the fighting left out. It may be sharp and discriminating, but it is sharpness of vision and discrimination of statement, distinguishing all the diversities of truth and combining them in solid and symmetrical completeness. Instead of tilting the lance, it turns the shield—the same shield, not some

deftly manipulated substitute—and seeks no other victory than that of first finding out and exhibiting the whole truth. It allows nothing personal to receive a moment's thought—nothing whatever but the subject under consideration; and it is all the same whether the opponent be a prince or a slave. Had one of the lordly knights been merely a plodding peasant, he might have had the good sense to say, "Let us take a look at the other side," and thus have settled the matter at once.

So, after all, any subject of honorable controversy, instead of being a proper issue at arms, is only a question of the other side, and of all the other sides.

But it ought to be remarked as one of the hopeful signs of the times, that though all the other sides occasionally seem to be so many specks of war, men are generally, and more than ever before, disposed to agree to differ, and thus decline the test of the tilt.

LIII.

FUTURE RETROSPECTION.

COMING now to the close of these brief studies of life, with perhaps increased interest in the true art of living, both the writer and his readers may well look forward to the final issue, when all who follow the Master here shall meet "within the veil." May none of us fail thus to meet again.

But, then and there, shall we not look back over all the past of life on earth? If so, can we now imagine such retrospect, or form any idea of how this life will then appear? And is it possible so to conduct the study and work of the living present that the ultimate review shall reveal no serious error?

Future retrospection is certain. The soul continues in conscious being after the death of the body. In the case of the righteous, to "be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal

in the heavens." The change of tenement or state of existence involves no loss of essential mental faculties.

Memory especially will remain unimpaired. Indeed, there is good reason for believing that it will be quickened into an intensity of action quite unknown in present experience. The rapidity with which the mind reviews the whole of life in the instant of sudden danger, and many other extraordinary facts exhibiting the retentiveness of memory, are only intimations of its future capability.

The rich man, who died and was buried, in the conscious suffering of his disembodied state distinctly remembered his earthly life, and was not without interest in the five brethren left behind. And when "the dead, small and great, shall stand before God" to be judged according to their works, the present life will be as an open book, and the conscious soul will see it all, and never forget the sight.

The point of observation thus obtained, if it were available now, would obviously have great advantages.

Life has many different sides, and is seen here only in part and in ever changing aspect. It is one thing in youth, quite another in old age, and at the intervening points "every thing by turns,

and nothing long." Besides the narrow range of vision, affording only partial views, there are many false lights and optical illusions, producing views which are altogether incorrect and subversive of every interest of life. A distorted vision is necessarily fatal to clearness of perception. Thus it happens that fools and philosophers are so nearly alike—alike in being all wrong.

The disadvantages of a merely temporal and worldly survey are insurmountable. Life can never be understood in its vast relations and true significance until it is seen from some point above and beyond itself. Such a point will certainly be reached when the soul looks back from the future state. There false appearances can no longer deceive, and all things will stand fully revealed in the light of eternity.

But when life is finished, knowledge comes too late. Neither the rich man nor Lazarus was allowed to return, though both had doubtless obtained new and corrected views of their former state. It was still within sight of memory, but forever beyond their reach. So will it be with all others. To be of any practical value, the real truth concerning human life must be known now, and known as clearly as when it shall be revealed in future retrospection.

Is this possible? Can a point of observation

which lies beyond the irrevocable change be made available before that change occurs?

Happily, the Scriptures solve the difficulty. To all the living, Moses and the prophets bear messages from the other world. In the Gospel a mount of vision is opened, and life is brought to light. The Word of God anticipates the discoveries of disembodied souls, and presents in faithful photographs from a future state all the great facts of earth and time. Occupying the point of view here provided, and supplementing the deficiencies of sight by the assurances of faith, we may behold this life as it will appear to us when we shall have passed beyond.

The knowledge thus obtained is amply sufficient for all practical purposes; and, though it may be greatly increased in the future, it will never need to be corrected. The truth of God's Word abides the same in time and eternity, while all its revelations are in strictest accordance with the real facts. Nothing more can be required to put man into right practical relations with all the interests of his life here and hereafter. Even the equivalent of future retrospection, with the additional benefit of present use, is rendered possible through the light of divine revelation.

Is this great practical purpose of the Word duly regarded and appreciated?

Do we receive with equal credit its revelations of the future and of the *present*? For the former there is no substitute of present sight, but for the latter we have our own eyes and the opinions of the world.

The actual ordinary views of life are often wholly at variance with the Scriptural, and always maintain more or less of competition. Which do we accept? Are we accustomed to look upon all things here from the mount of holy vision and in the clear light of heaven, or from the midst of the multitude and through the smoke of dimly burning tapers? Are our views of this life such as the Scriptures afford, or only the false estimate of a blinded world?

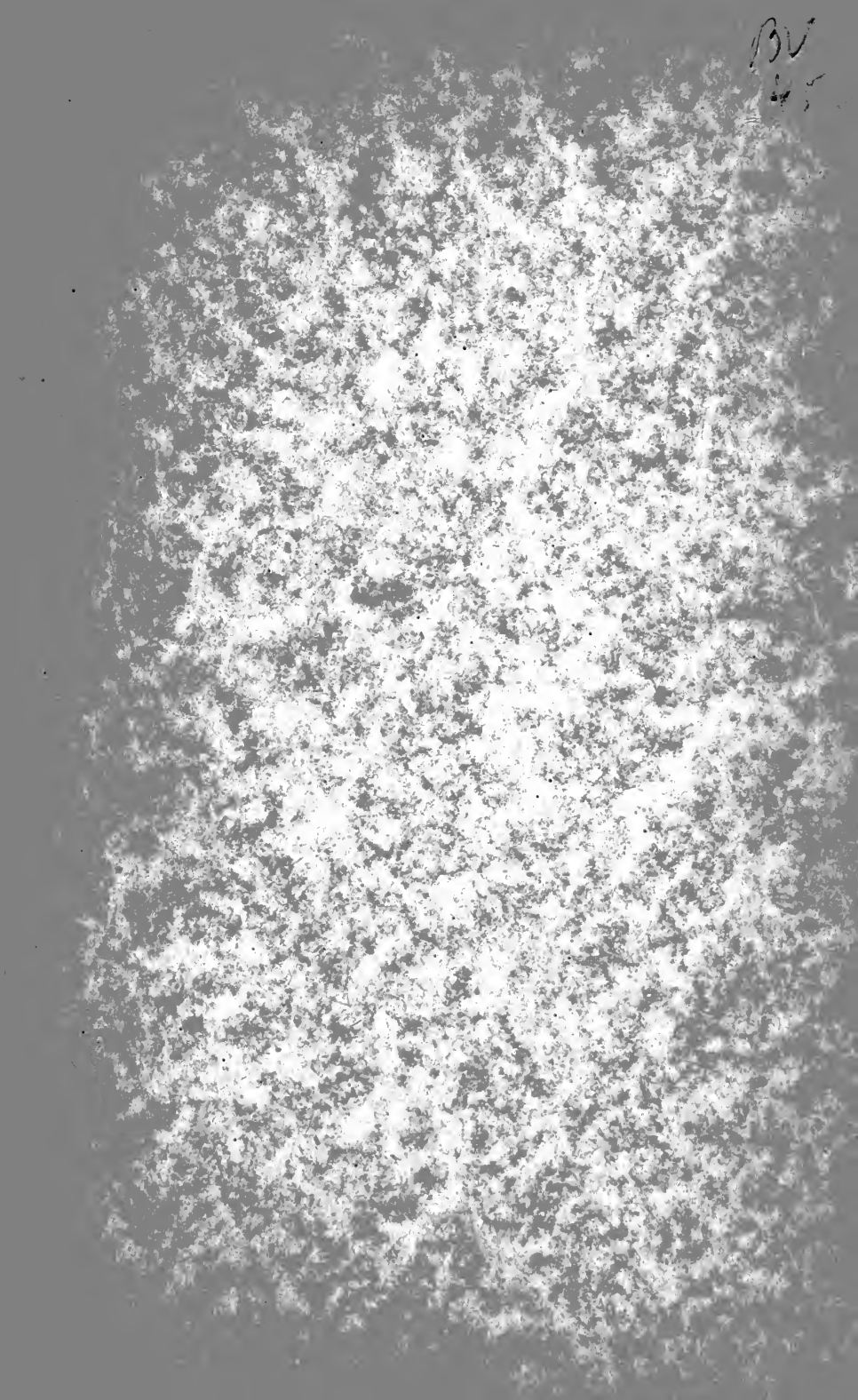
In the competition between sight and faith, and the perpetual conflict of apparent with real interests, we are certainly liable to be deceived, and to remain deceived until the fearful awakening in the world to come. To guard against this liability, let every one of us seek the utmost possible familiarity with the great practical truths of God's Word, and thus endeavor habitually to ascertain how every part of this life will appear from the point of future retrospection.

"Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."





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